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INDIAN SOCIETY

HISTORICAL PROBINGS

IN MEMORY OF D. D. KOSAMBI

INDIAN COUNCIL OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi passed away on 29 June 1966 at the age of 59. He was a versatile scholar, and his penetrating researches covered an extraordinarily wide range. An outstanding mathematician, he raised numismatics to the level of exact science by applying statistical methods to it. Kosambi not only used dialectical materialism in the study of early Indian history but also developed this approach by making it interdisciplinary. His writings have immensely enriched our theoretical understanding of ancient India and given a new dimension to historical research.

The present collection of essays gives a measure of the man and his ideas, and is a belated, posthumous tribute of his fellow workers to his brilliance and manysided scholarship. They deal with significant problems in India's social history. Some examine the social milieu of religious developments, others discuss the social classes and their interrelationship in ancient and medieval times, and still others investigate the nature of working and capitalist classes.

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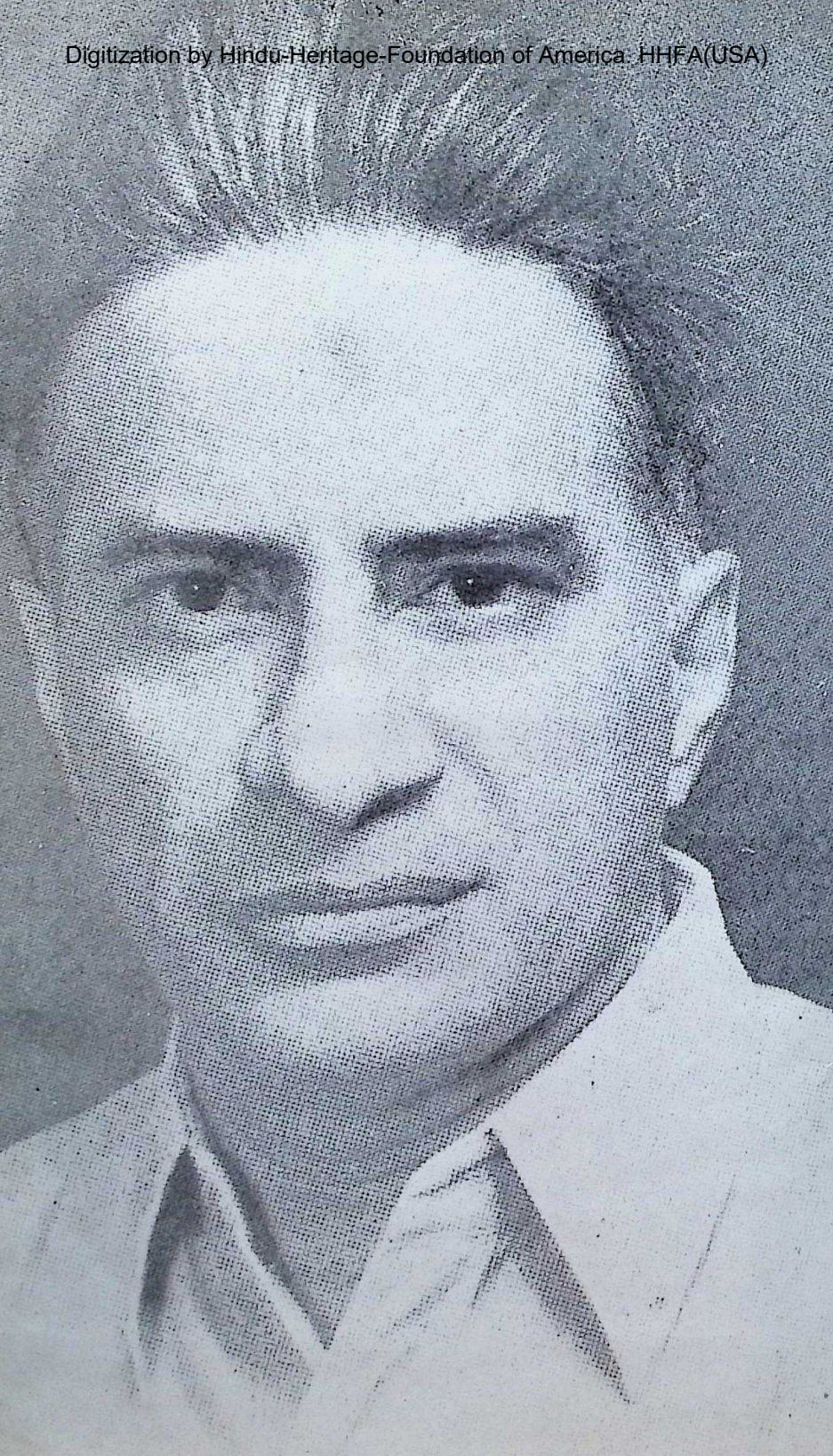

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INDIAN SOCIETY : HISTORICAL PROBINGS

In Memory of D. D. Kosambi

Edited by
R. S. SHARMA
In Collaboration with
VIVEKANAND JHA

Sponsored by
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Preface

Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi was not a practising historian, but the four books and sixty articles that he wrote made such a great impact on the world of Indian history that during the last fifteen years or so there has been hardly any significant publication which does not take note of his views. The questions that he raised and the suggestions that he made are being debated in the classrooms and seminars. An outstanding mathematician, Kosambi not only raised numismatics to the level of exact science by applying statistical methods to it but also enriched our theoretical understanding of ancient Indian history as a whole. His researches have altered both the approach to early India and the methods of its study. Unfortunately he did not receive much of formal recognition from historians in his lifetime. The present collection of essays is a belated, posthumous tribute of his fellow workers to his brilliance and many-sided scholarship.

The idea of bringing out a volume in memory of Professor Kosambi was first mooted in 1967. Although it has taken us seven years to collect these articles and get them printed, the publication does not have proper diacritics in the case of several letters and is not free from minor slips; for these lacunae we crave the indulgence of readers. The contributors deserve our thanks for their co-operation as well as for the patience with which they have awaited the publication of their pieces. For collecting these articles I received help from Dr D. N. Jha. Dr R. L. Shukla finalized the index, and Mr M. N. Bhat supplied a photograph of the late Professor Kosambi. To all these I give my sincere thanks.

22 May 1974 R. S. Sharma

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Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi

(31 July 1907—29 June 1966)

V. V. Gokhale

Death overtook Professor D. D. Kosambi in his bed in the early hours of 29 June 1966 prematurely and almost surreptitiously, after he had been declared generally fit on the previous day by his family doctor. It was a case of myocardial infract. A glance at the accompanying list of his publications will bring home to us the serious loss the world of progressive and talented writers has suffered and the void his death has left among the leading savants of renascent India.

Born at Kosben in Goa, then under the rule of the Portuguese colonialists, Damodar Kosambi was brought up in a family known for its rigorous standards of learning and social behaviour. He had inherited from his father, the renowned Buddhist scholar Dharmanand Kosambi, an insatiable spirit of inquiry, a love of wandering and a sharp, versatile intellect, which took him quickly ahead of his co-workers and gave his views a rare sense of originality. After some schooling in India, his father, who had accepted a teaching assignment at Harvard (USA), took him to the Cambridge Latin School, where as a boy of eleven he dedicated himself to a student's hard life until after about eight years we see him emerging as a brilliant young graduate of the Harvard University in Mathematics, History and Languages. On returning to India he worked for a few years at the Banaras Hindu University and then at the Aligarh Muslim University

Reprinted from the *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, xlvii (Poona, 1967), 118-30.

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before he decided to settle down in Poona in 1932 as Professor of Mathematics at the Fergusson College—a college known for its pioneering services in the field of national education and where his father had taught for many years and laid the foundations of Buddhist Studies in western India. It was during the crucial period of fourteen years he spent at this college, which he in lighter vein characterized as "Rama's exile into the wilderness", that Professor Kosambi carried on an incessant struggle for mastery in various fields of knowledge and laid the foundations of his greatness as a scholar and a thinker.

Endowed with a powerful and far-reaching imagination and an outstanding mathematical ability, Kosambi, who had concentrated his mind almost exclusively upon mathematical research up to 1939, was gradually led to use his abstract methods for obtaining new results in various branches of social sciences. He began by applying statistical methods to Indian numismatics. He was seen weighing with the utmost precision and unremitting zeal thousands of punch-marked coins obtained from different museums in the country and thrashing out his data until he could establish their chronological sequence, forward convincing arguments regarding the economic conditions under which they could have been minted, and discover facts about the dynastic history of the pre-Mauryan period, based upon a wide study of the ancient literary sources and his new metrological findings. The more he examined the productive spirit working behind the panorama of Indian history, the more charmed he was by the manifold aspects of Indian culture, the past as well as the present. While giving mathematical precision to his ideas in the various branches of humanities, he turned almost instinctively to his Sanskrit inheritance. His frank and scholarly estimate of Bhartṛhari's aphorisms and later of Vidyākara's anthology, *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa,* was a standing testimony to his versatile genius and quick mastery of the latest advances in literary criticism. In these and other Indological studies covering a wide range of subjects from the Vedic and the Epic to the classical literature of India he owed as much to Sukthankar's prolegomena to the critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* as to the most modern standards of criticism in the West.

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Being deeply preoccupied with the entire field of knowledge as it were, it was no wonder that his mathematical lectures in the Fergusson College seemed to go well over the heads of the postgraduate candidates. That as a result of this Kosambi had to leave the college ought to open our eyes to the dangers involved in our borrowing an examination-ridden system and uninspiring standards of education in this country. The width of his comprehension and his penetrating researches, however, had been making their mark among the scientific circles of India and abroad. It was not long before he was offered the Chair for Mathematics in the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research of Bombay in 1946, which he held for the next sixteen years. The new position offered him opportunities of developing closer contacts with scholars of his own calibre all over the world and of meeting his financial responsibilities better than before. Kosambi, however, could not relish the conditions under which he had to work. Living in his own house in the BORI Colony, Poona, he had to march every morning to the railway station and make the "Deccan Queen" his second home in order to attend to his duties in Bombay. Besides, a man of his temperament, solely dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and social enlightenment, was entitled, he thought, to a freedom of thought and action, such as we hardly expect to meet with in an emergent society struggling for its economic independence. All the same, he was able now not only to give a final shape to some of his earlier studies, but also to launch upon new orientations in the fields of Biology, Ethnology, Archaeology and Prehistory. And every now and then we see him turning back from his study of the social sciences to the development of his research in the comparatively abstract or pure fields of science: the last book he sent out for publication dealt with Prime Numbers. His last major work, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London, 1965), which has now come to be translated into several European and Asian languages, set the seal of recognition on his vast erudition, his ability to discover basic motives of human civilization and his brilliant powers of exposition.

It is not for us to estimate the scientific advances made by Professor Kosambi in the fields of Genetics, Statistics and Mathe-

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matics or the part played by him in various other spheres of activity, e.g., in his capacity as Member of the World Peace Council visiting the socialist countries of the East and the West. He believed in the Marxist method of interpreting and changing the human society, but did not hesitate to revise the data of Marx himself in the light of modern research. As an independent thinker with a passionate devotion to scientific research, he seemed to be almost exclusively preoccupied with his own intellectual pursuits. As such, he was sometimes accused of brusqueness and intolerance, but he had obviously no use, nor time for all the sophistications of our normal social life, nor could he afford to waste his energies on empty rituals and ceremonies, except for treating them as objects of his anthropological studies. And yet, whenever he found some time to relax, his childlike simplicity and sparkling wit were most refreshing even to those who were nearest to him and he spread laughter and sunshine around him. Towards his friends he was generous to a fault. His inner life was marked by an unmistakable streak of asceticism, while his ethical standards were unusually high and severe. Professor D. D. Kosambi deserves to be remembered as one of the highly gifted and versatile scientific workers and indefatigable scholars of modern India for whom a relentless search for the highest human values was the only natural way of life.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES BY D. D. KOSAMBI

(Based on his notes)

1. Books

1. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1956).
2. *Exasperating Essays: Exercise in the Dialectical Method* (People's Book House, Poona, 1957).
3. *Myth and Reality: Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1962).
4. *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1965).

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II. Edited Works

1. *The Śatakatrayam of Bhartṛhari with the Comm. of Rāmarṣi,* edited in collaboration with Pt. K. V. Krishnamoorthi Sharma (Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, No. 127, Poona, 1945), pp. 2+140+6+1.
2. *The Southern Archetype of Epigrams Ascribed to Bhartṛhari* (Bharatiya Vidya Series 9, Bombay, 1946), pp. 176+13+8. (First critical edition of a Bhartṛhari recension.)
3. *The Epigrams Attributed to Bhartṛhari* (Singhi Jain Series 23, Bombay, 1948), pp. viii+82+240. (Comprehensive edition of the poet's work, remarkable for rigorous standards of text criticism.)
4. *The Subhāṣitaratnakośa of Vidyākara,* edited in collaboration with V. V. Gokhale (Harvard Oriental Series 42, 1957).
5. *The Cintāmaṇi-sāraṇikā of Daśabala;* Supplement to *Journal of Oriental Research,* xix, pt. II (Madras, 1952), viii+15. (A Sanskrit astronomical work which shows that King Bhoja of Dhāra died in 1055-56.)

III. Articles

1. "Precessions of an Elliptical Orbit", *The Indian Journal of Physics,* v, pt. III (1930), 359-64.
2. "On a Generalization of the Second Theorem of Bourbaki", *Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences,* UP, i (1931) (3 pages).
3. "Modern Differential Geometries", *The Indian Journal of Physics,* vii, pt. II (1932), 159-64.
4. "On the Existence of a Metric and the Inverse Variational Problem", *Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences,* UP, ii (1932), 17-28.
5. "Geometrie Differentielle et Calcul des Variations", *Rendiconti della R. Accademia Nazionale Dei Lincei,* xvi, Series 6 (1932), 410-15.
6. "On Differential Equations with the Group Property", *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society,* xix (1932), 215-19.
7. "Affin-geometrische Grundlagen der Einheitlichen Feld-

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theorie", *Sitzungsberichten der Preuss B. Akademic der Wissenschaften, Physikalisch-mathematische Klasse,* xxviii (1932), 342-45.

8. "The Classification of Integers", *Journal of the University of Bombay,* ii, pt. II (1933), 18-20.
9. "The Problem of Differential Invariants", *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society,* xx (1933), 185-88.
10. "Parallelism and Path-spaces", *Mathematische Zeitschrift,* xxxvii (1933), 608-18.
11. "Collineations in Path-space", *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society,* i (1934), 69-72.
12. "Continuous Groups and Two Theorems of Euler", *The Mathematics Student,* ii (1934), 94-100.
13. "The Maximum Modulus Theorem", *Journal of the University of Bombay,* iii, pt. II (1934), 11-12.
14. "Systems of Differential Equations of the Second Order", *The Quarterly Journal of Mathematics,* vi (Oxford, 1935), 1-12.
15. "Homogeneous Metrics", *Proceedings of the Indian Academy of Science,* i (1935), 952-54.
16. "An Affine Calculus of Variations", Ibid. ii (1935), 333-35.
17. "Differential Geometry of the Laplace Equation", *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society,* ii (1936), 141-43.
18. "Path-spaces of Higher Order", *The Quarterly Journal of Mathematics,* vii (Oxford, 1936), 97-104.
19. "Path-geometry and Cosmogony", Ibid. pp. 290-293.
20. "Les metriques homogenes dans les espaces cosmogoniques", *Comptes Rendus,* ccvi (Paris, 1938), 1086-88.
21. "Les espaces des paths generalises qu'on peut associer avec un espace de Finsler", Ibid. pp. 1538-41.
22. "The Tensor Analysis of Partial Differential Equations", *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society,* iii (1939), 249-53.
23. "A Note on the Trial of Sokrates", *Fergusson College Magazine* (1939), pp. 1-6 (Sokrates and the class war of his day); Reprinted in *Exasperating Essays.*
24. "The Emergence of National Characteristics among Three Indo-European Peoples", *Annals of the Bhandarkar*

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Oriental Research Institute, xx, pt. II (Poona, 1940), 195-206. (Trial speculation on Indology.)

25. (a) "The Function of Leadership in a Mass Movement"; (b) "The Cawnpore Road", *Fergusson College Magazine* (1939-40), pp. 1-7 (A critique of dialectical-materialistic social theory; a story published under the pseudonym "Ahriman"); Reprinted in *Exasperating Essays*.

26. (a) "Revolution and the Progress of Science", *New Age*, v, 320-25. (A survey of the effects of the Revolution upon Mathematics in the USSR); (b) "Science Learns the Goose-step", Ibid. pages unknown, as the Journal was suppressed soon after.

27. "Path-equations Admitting the Lorentz (Group-I)", *Journal of the London Mathematical Society*, xv (1940), 86-91.

28. "A Statistical Study of the Weights of the Old Indian Punch-marked Coins", *Current Science*, ix (1940), 312-14.

29. "A Note on Two Hoards of Punch-marked Coins Found at Taxila", *New Indian Antiquary*, iii (1940), 156-57.

30. "The Concept of Isotropy in Generalized Path-spaces", *Journal of Indian Mathematical Society*, iv (1940), 80-88.

31. "A Note on Frequency Distribution in Series", *The Mathematics Student*, viii (1940), 151-55.

32. "On the Study and Metrology of Silver Punch-marked Coins", *New Indian Antiquary*, iv (1941), 1-35 and 49-76 (Numismatics as a science, with an application to its most difficult problem); (b) Additions and Corrections, Ibid. v (1942).

33. "A Bivariate Extension of Fisher's Z Test", *Current Science*, x (1941), 191-92.

34. "Correlation and Time Series", Ibid. pp. 372-74.

35. "The Quality of Renunciation in Bhartṛhari's Poetry", *Fergusson College Magazine* (1941). (A Study in Comparative Literature). Republished with changes in

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Bharatiya Vidya (1946), pp. 49-62. Reprinted in *Exasperating Essays.*

36. "Path-equations Admitting the Lorentz (Group-II)", *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society,* v (1941), 62-72.

37. "On the Origin and Development of Silver Coinage in India", *Current Science,* x (1941), 395-400. (Shows that the punch-marked coinage system developed from Mohenjo-daro cut silver pieces.)

38. "On Valid Tests of Linguistic Hypotheses", *New Indian Antiquary,* v (1942), 21-24.

39. "Zeros and Closure of Orthogonal Functions", *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society,* vi (1942), 16-24.

40. "The Effect of Circulation upon the Weight of Metallic Currency", *Current Science,* xi (1942), 227-31.

41. "A Test of Significance for Multiple Observations", Ibid. pp. 271-74.

42. "Progress in the Production and Consumption of Textile Goods in India", *Journal of Indian Merchants' Chamber* (Bombay, 1943), pp. 11-15. Published as by "Vidyarthi" and Miss Sushila Gokhale.

43. "Race and Immunity in India", *New Indian Antiquary,* vi (1943), 29-33.

44. "Statistics in Function Space", *Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society,* vii (1943), 76-88.

45. "Soviet Victory and the World Revolution", *Indo-Soviet Journal,* ii (7 November 1943), 6, (Shows that the theory of world revolution had not been abandoned by the USSR, as of that date.)

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51. "Caste and Class in India", *Science and Society*, viii (1944), 243-49. (Comment on an article by P. Rosas on the subject.)
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53. "Parallelism in the Tensor Analysis of Partial Differential Equations", *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society*, li (1945), 293-96.
54. "The Raman Effect" (Anonymous, as by an "Indian Scientist"), *People's Age* (22 July 1945).
55. "Some Extant Versions of Bhartṛhari's *Śatakas*", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xxi (1945), 17-32.
56. "The Law of Large Numbers", *The Mathematics Student*, xiv (1946), 14-19.
57. "The *Parvasaṃgraha* of the *Mahābhārata*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, lxvi, no. 2 (Baltimore, 1946), 110-17; followed by the counts of E. D. Kulkarni, Ibid. 118-44. (First complete discussion of the problem and of V. S. Sukthankar's concept of a "fluid text".)
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61. "Early Stages of the Caste System in Northern India", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, New Series, xxii (1946), 33-48.
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63. "An Extension of the Least-squares Method of Statistical Estimation", *Annals of Eugenics*, xiii (1947), 257-61.

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64. "Some Applications of the Functional Calculus", Presidential Address to the Mathematics Section of the Indian Science Congress (Delhi, 1947). (Completely ruined in printing; no proof shown to the author.)
65. "Les Invariants Differentiels d'un Tenseur Covariant a deux Indices", *Comptes Rendus,* ccxxv (Paris, 1947), 790-92.
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68. "Chronological Order of Punch-marked Coins—I: A Re-examination of the Older Taxila Hoard", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* xxiv-xxv (1948-49), 33-47.
69. "The Avatāra Syncretism and Possible Sources of the *Bhagvad-Gītā*", Ibid. pp. 121-34.
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71. "Lie Rings in Path-space", *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science,* USA, xxxv (1949), 389-94.
72. "Marxism and Ancient Indian Culture" (Adverse review of S. A. Dange's *India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*), *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute,* xxix (Poona, 1949), 271-77.
73. "Differential Invariants of a Two-index Tensor", *Bulletin of the American Mathematical Society,* lv, no. 2 (1949), 90-94.
74. "On the Origin of Brahmin Gotras", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society,* xxvi (1950), 21-80.
75. "Series Expansions of Continuous Groups", *Quarterly Journal of Mathematics,* ii, no. 2 (Oxford, 1951), 244-57.

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77. "Urvaśī and Purūravas", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xxvii (1951), 1-30. Reprinted in *Indian Studies: Past & Present*, i, no. 1 (Calcutta, 1959), 141-75, and in *Myth and Reality*.
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79. "Seasonal Variations in the Indian Birth-rate" (in collaboration with S. Raghavachari) *Annals of Eugenics*, xvi (1951), 165-92.
80. "Imperialism and Peace", *Monthly Review*, iii (1951), 45-49.
81. "*Parvasaṃgraha* figures for the *Bhīṣma Parvan*" (in collaboration with E. D. Kulkarni), *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, lxxi (Baltimore, 1951), 21-25.
82. "Path-spaces Admitting Collineations", *Quarterly Journal of Mathematics*, ii, no. 3 (Oxford, 1952), 1-11.
83. "The Sanskrit Equivalents of Two Pali Words", *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, xxxii (Poona, 1952), 53-60 (Gives the correct derivation of *sammapāso* and *vassakāra*.)
84. "Path-Geometry and Continuous Groups", *Quarterly Journal of Mathematics*, ii, no. 3 (Oxford, 1952), 307-20.
85. "Ancient Kosala and Magadha", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xxvii (1952), 180-213.
86. "Science and Freedom", *Monthly Review*, iv (1952), 200-05.
87. "Geldner's *Rgveda*", *Journal of Oriental Research* (Madras, 1952), pp. 291-95 (Essay review with special attention to words like *ibhya*).
88. "Chronological Order of Punch-marked Coins—III: The Paila Hoard", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xxvii (1952), 261-71.

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89. "Brahmin Clans", *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* lxxiii (Baltimore, 1953), 202-8. (Review and critique of J. Brough's book, *The Early Brāhmaṇical System of Gotra and Pravara,* Cambridge, 1953. Mistaken for a polemic.)
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91. "The Periodization of Indian History", *ISCUS,* i (1954), 40-55. (Arbitrarily changed by the editors, without consulting the author.)
92. "Notes on the Class Structure of India", *Monthly Review,* vi (1954), 205-13. Reprinted in *Exasperating Essays.*
93. "The Metric in Path-space", *Tensor,* New Series, iii (1954), 67-74.
94. "What Constitutes Indian History?", *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute,* xxxv (Poona, 1955), 194-201. (Essay review of the first three volumes of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's *The History and Culture of the Indian People.*)
95. "The Basis of Ancient Indian History—I", *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* lxxv, no. 1 (Baltimore, 1955), 35-45.
96. "The Basis of Ancient Indian History—II", Ibid. no. 4 (1955), 226-37.
97. "The Working Class in the *Amarakośa*", *Journal of Oriental Research,* xxiv (Madras, 1955), 57-69. (Shows the existence of a hierarchical principle in the *Amarakośa* classification.)
98. "On the Development of Feudalism in India", *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute,* xxxvi, pts. III-IV (Poona, 1956), 258-69. (Adverse critique of Soviet Professor K. A. Antonova's theories.)
99. "Origins of Feudalism in Kashmir", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.* (The Sārdha-śatābdī Commemoration Volume, 1804-1954, Bombay, 1956-57), pp. 108-20.

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100. "Dhenukākaṭa", *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xxx, pt. II (1957), 50-71. (Identification of the ancient Greek colony in Maharashtra. Also, complete text and translation of all known Brahmi inscriptions in Maval caves, including one from Karle hitherto unpublished. The first photograph of the Sphinx on a Karle pillar.)

101. "The Basis of Despotism", *Economic Weekly* (Bombay, 2 November 1957), pp. 1417-19. (Review of K. A. Wittfogel's *Oriental Despotism*.)

102. "Indo-Ariiskii Nosovoi Ukazatel", *Sovetskaya Etnografia* (Ak. Nauk. USSR), no. 1 (1958), 39-57. (Demonstrates the unreliability of nasal-index data in theorizing about Indian racial groups.)

103. "Classical Tauberian Theorems", *Journal of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics*, x, nos. 1-2 (1958), 141-49.

104. "The Efficiency of Randomization by Card Shuffling" (in collaboration with U.V.R. Rao), *Journal of Royal Statistics Society*, cxxi, no. 2 (1958), 223-33. (Analysis of statistical defects underlying para-psychological experiments.)

105. "The Text of the *Arthaśāstra*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, lxxviii, no. 3 (Baltimore, 1958), 169-73. (Shows that about a quarter of the original work is lost, but more or less uniformly over the whole text.)

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108. "China's Communes", *Monthly Review*, x (1959), 425-29.

109. "Primitive Communism", *New Age* (Monthly), viii, no. 2 (February 1959), 26-39. (First treatment of "Communism" in primitive society, without idealization of ethnographic data.)

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110. "Indian Feudal Trade Charters", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, ii, pt. III (Leiden, 1959), 281-93. (Special treatment of the Viṣṇusena Charter of A.D. 592, correcting D. C. Sircar's gruesome mistakes.)
111. "An Application of Stochastic Convergence", *Journal of the Indian Society of Agricultural Statistics*, xi (1959), 58-72.
112. "At the Cross-roads : Mother Goddess Cult Sites in Ancient India", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London, 1960), 17-31; 135-44.
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114. "Kaniṣka and the Śaka Era", *Marg* (April 1962); also *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xxxv (1962), 36-37, (Identifies Kaniṣka I with Soter Megas and Kaniṣka II with the king of the coins.)
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116. "Megaliths in the Poona District", *MAN* (May 1962), note 108, pp. 65-67+plate.
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119. "Prehistoric Rock Engravings near Poona", *MAN* (1963), note 60, pp. 57-58.
120. "Staple 'Grains' in the Western Deccan", *MAN* (1963), note 156, pp. 30-31.

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121. "The Beginning of the Iron Age in India", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient,* vi, pt. III (Leiden, 1963), 309-18 (Places this important change at about 800-700 B.C., much earlier than D. H. Gordon and Mortimer Wheeler would have it.)

122. "The Autochthonous Element in the *Mahābhārata*", *Journal of the American Oriental Society,* lxxxiv (Baltimore, 1964), 31-44.

123. "The Historical Krishna", *Times of India Annual* (1965), pp. 27-36.

124. "Numismatics as a Science", *Scientific American* (February 1966), pp. 102-11.

125. "Living Prehistory in India", Ibid. (February 1967). Reprinted in *The American Review* (October 1967).

126. "Adventure into the Unknown", *Current Trends in Indian Philosophy,* ed. K. S. Murty and K. R. Rao (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1972), pp. 152-67. (A note on the writer's personal philosophy as a scientist and research worker.)

127. "Prime Numbers", Monograph completed a few days before the author's death.

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"Baba"

A Personal Tribute

A. L. Basham

I first met D. D. Kosambi during the 1949-50 university session, when I had been a lecturer at London for only a year or two and had much to learn. One cold day in autumn or winter (I forget which), a tall spare Indian with greying hair and rugged but pleasant features came into my room at the School of Oriental and African Studies. He introduced himself as D. D. Kosambi, who had come to London partly to meet mathematicians and partly to discuss his researches on Indian punch-marked coins with the numismatists at the British Museum. His stay in England on that occasion was a very brief one, but I had several long talks with him, and arranged for him to give a lecture to my students. From that time onward we kept up our friendship, meeting whenever possible, whether in India or in England, and exchanging fairly frequent letters. I have met no one who could crowd so much information into an air letter as he, partly by typing right up to the edges of the paper and partly by extreme conciseness of expression.

We argued a great deal. I did not go all the way with him in his Marxist interpretation of Indian history, though I agreed with many of his conclusions; and when, early in the course of our friendship, I published a lengthy review of his *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956) in which I criticized some of his theories (rather sarcastically) I feared reprisals; but he accepted my remarks without rancour, and our

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friendship was in no way impaired. Whenever I was in the neighbourhood of Bombay I would visit him in his home in Poona, and, armed with a special stick which was equipped with a chisel-shaped point for prizing microliths out of the earth, he would take me and his dog Bonzo for long walks in the beautiful rolling countryside, introducing me to village shrines and sacred trees, and discussing their significance, as survivals of the prehistoric culture of the Deccan. In the last few years of his life he often complained of arthritic pain, but it rarely deterred him from his walks in search of microliths or from working in his study until the early hours of morning.

At first it seemed that he had only three interests, which filled his life to the exclusion of all others—ancient India, in all its aspects, mathematics and the preservation of peace. For the last, as well as for his two intellectual interests, he worked hard and with devotion, according to his deep convictions. Yet as one grew to know him better one realized that the range of his heart and mind was very wide. He had a great love of literature in all languages. Once he impressed me by quoting passages from John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* from memory. I was surprised that he should know this seventeenth century English religious classic so well, and suggested that his taste for Bunyan was rather incongruous in a professed unbeliever. He replied that he loved Bunyan because his language was so beautiful and simple, he was a product of the popular culture of the time, and he imparted valuable moral lessons, even to one who had no faith.

In the later years of his life, when his attention turned increasingly to anthropology as a means of reconstructing the past, it became more than ever clear that he had a very deep feeling for the lives of the simple people of Maharashtra. When he described local festivals, and religious ceremonies or showed the excellent colour slides that he had taken of them, one felt that he would have liked to participate, to identify himself with the peasants worshipping at a village shrine or making a pilgrimage to Pandharpur. Once, when he was mildly complaining of the pains which the doctors seemed incapable of curing, it struck me suddenly that they might be psychologically

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caused, the product of the tension between the unbelief to which his reason compelled him and the deep-seated traditions of his ancestral faith, which his reason had rejected but which still, in reason's spite, affected his semi-conscious and sub-conscious emotions. Very tentatively I made this suggestion to him, and advised him, as a psychologist of the Jungian school might have done, to go on a pilgrimage to Pandharpur and perform all the rituals of the ordinary pilgrim, even if he had no belief in them, in the hope that his health would improve. He laughed, and replied that he could not do this, however beneficial to his health, for thus he would betray his faith in reason and common sense.

Impatient with hypocrisy, inefficiency, bureaucracy, dogmatism and intolerance, a man of very deep convictions and strong principles, with a very powerful will, he may have made enemies as well as friends. Some may have found him difficult to collaborate with as a colleague. As a friend I found him always loyal, sympathetic and helpful. His company was invariably stimulating; he was never at a loss for a subject of conversation and he infected one with his own enthusiasm. It was with a deep sense of personal loss that I learnt of the death of my very good friend "Baba".

It is as a friend rather than as a scholar that I shall chiefly remember him, but this statement is in no way intended to disparage his scholarship. I am not qualified to pass judgment on his work in mathematics, and have hardly the right to assess his editions of Sanskrit poetical texts, which, according to the specialists, are marvels of their kind.

As a historian he made very important contributions to the study of many aspects of Indian history. His statistical analysis of the punch-marked coins has produced one of the most convincing interpretations of these so far to have been offered. His *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* is in many respects an epoch-making work, containing brilliantly original ideas on almost every page; if it contains errors and misinterpretations here and there, if now and again its author attempts to force his data into a rather doctrinaire pattern, this does not appre-

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ciably lessen the significance of this very exciting book, which has stimulated the thought of thousands of students throughout the world. In his later publications he continued to point the way to the only means whereby we can reconstruct a convincing picture of the early history of India as a whole, rather than of the India of pandits and dynasties—by a judicious combination of the techniques of history, archaeology and anthropology. In his stature, his intellect and his integrity of spirit, he was indeed a truly great man.

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My Friendship with D. D. Kosambi

DANIEL H. H. INGALLS

That two such different persons as D. D. Kosambi and I should have become friends is remarkable. But Kosambi was a remarkable man. I should like to share my memory of him, but I despair of sketching his personality in the brief compass of an article. Instead, I shall let Kosambi, for the most part, tell how the friendship arose. By quoting from his early letters to me, as occasionally interrupted by summaries or fragments of my letters to him, the reader may feel something of the biting satire, the passionate energy, and the abiding scholarship of my late friend.

My first letter from Kosambi was in response to a review that I had written of his book *The Epigrams Attributed to Bhartṛhari*. His letter began with thanks, proceeded, despite his disclaimer, to pounce on one of the points where he disagreed with me, and ended with a characteristic flash of ridicule.

Bombay, January 6, 1951

Dear Dr Ingalls,

Many thanks for the most sympathetic and even flattering review of my Bhartṛhari, which came yesterday. I shall not join issue with you on the points where we differ, but one day, if you study the background of Sanskrit literature in its social and historical context, I think you will come to much the same conclusions as mine. Incidentally, "office-seeker" bears a connotation (to my foreign ear) which I should not apply to Bhartṛhari.... He was

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a man without regular means of livelihood, or regular course of action that would qualify him for one. Favour of kings in that period, their patronage, meant reward but not office; at least, not for a poet who wasn't much else.

. . . In any case it is extremely gratifying to find any one who takes the trouble to go so carefully through both text and preface! Accept my thanks for the good words.

. . . There are many supplementary discoveries and additions that will need a paper by themselves. . . . The Udaipur kings did not read all of Bhartṛhari so carefully as the *śṛṅgāra* part and the bound codex naturally opened to a worn page of the *Anaṅgaraṅga's* section on aphrodisiacs. Draw your own conclusions!

Yours sincerely,
D. D. Kosambi

Our correspondence continued. Kosambi thanked me for a book of mine. He wrote asking about his father's posthumous *Visuddhimagga,* which after years of delay had appeared in the Harvard Oriental Series just two weeks before the date of his enquiry. Later, when our acquaintance had ripened into friendship, Kosambi was often to speak to me of his father. Dharmanand Kosambi had lived for some years in America in the course of an extraordinary journey in pursuit of truth that took him on the circuit of the globe. He had returned to Maharashtra a Buddhist, who by his forceful writings inspired those who were intellectually strong and antagonized those who wanted their *sanātana dharma* without intellectual effort. D. D. Kosambi always expressed an intense admiration of his father. He felt that his father had been mistaken in the goal of quietism that he chose; the son chose a far different goal. But the passion for the search and the scorn of non-searchers were common to both men.

It was because of the father's sojourn that the son had taken his high school and college education in the United States. Why Kosambi failed to go on to the doctorate he explained in a letter where he first suggested that we drop our titles in writing each other. The letter also refers to the plan I was forming of spending the year, from June onward, in India.

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Bombay, February 14, 1952

Dear Ingalls,

Let us agree to drop the formalities, particularly as I never achieved the doctorate with which you regularly credit me. I had to work my way through Harvard and took the bachelor's degree in February 1929, giving up the attempt to get on with my formal education in May 1929, for the depression was about to break and casual jobs were vanishing before the debacle. Incidentally, I had no fellowship either, being "interested in too many things", not to speak of my uncouth appearance, rude manners, and the rest. This preamble is for your private information.

I should be sorry if you left India without our being able to meet. June is the last month of our holidays, so that I should—in the normal course of events—be back here on July 1. My programme is very simple in that I arrive from Poona on Monday mornings if Monday is a working day and leave again on Friday evening. The week-ends at Poona give me time to do some thinking, while the five working days at Bombay are spent mostly on "scientific" pursuits ....

[Most of the holidays] I again spend at Poona, though I make two trips of a fortnight every year to Bangalore where my mother is spending the final years of her life....

It was some time before this that I had suggested that Kosambi edit for the Harvard Oriental Series Vidyākara's *Subhāṣitaratnakośa,* the oldest of the great anthologies of Sanskrit verse. He and V. V. Gokhale had ascertained that this collection contained several verses of the Bhartṛhari canon. At first they had photographs of only one manuscript of the anthology. These photographs, taken by Rahula Sankrityayana at the monastery of Ngor in Tibet, crowded so many pages onto a single plate that they were almost indecipherable. Soon Kosambi found a library listing of a second manuscript in Kathmandu; then it was reported that Professor Tucci in Rome had a second set of photographs of the Ngor manuscript. Kosambi had accepted my invitation to edit the work on the condition that V. V. Gokhale be made joint editor.

Now my interest in the anthology was mounting, and with it my eagerness to see Kosambi and examine the photographs at

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first hand. So my original plan of basing my Indian visit on Calcutta, where I had lived many years before, gradually changed to a plan of staying for the greater part of my time in Poona. Kosambi offered me advice on my preparations at the very moment that he was preparing for a strenuous but brief trip of his own to China. He hoped to get the Ngor manuscript of our text from Tibet through Chinese mediation, but the main object of his trip was connected with the Chinese Peace Committee. I was interested in the first object and disapproved silently of the second.

Poona, May 17, 1952

Dear Ingalls,

Yours of the 12th just received....

I told you of my hopes of getting something directly from China. Unfortunately, I had to refuse an invitation to China last year, and may have to repeat the performance now. I am supposed to fly not later than a week from today, at the invitation of the Chinese Peace Committee. The Prime Minister informs me through his First Secretary that there will be no obstacle in my way *but* (and the real reply begins always after such a "but") the others whom I am supposed to lead in a delegation of three will not be allowed. In addition, it is made unmistakably clear that the PM would be very happy to see me refuse. I have asked him to reconsider; if he refuses, I shall have to stay back in protest. Going alone is still a possibility, but to tell you the truth I hate travelling and do not want to go just for the MS. In the Peace Movement we put the Movement first and work as sincerely as possible in spite of all sorts of filth thrown at us by enemies. You see the difficulty, namely that a MS is not likely to be located in distant Tibet for one who refuses invitations again and again. However, I shall try by letter. The last letter was lost by the agent, and this one may be too.

Your decision to come to Poona will be, I think, wiser than the former one. As you know, your Embassy keeps close tabs on most U.S. citizens here and will not be too happy if you advertise your association with me. [Ed. note: the U.S. Embassy never paid me the slightest heed.] But you can count on me for whatever help you need....You

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should write immediately. . . and ask for full access to the facilities of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute and also for a suite of rooms at the BORI Guest House. They are tolerable and I can always help out as I live nearby.

The letter continued with thumb-nail sketches of various scholars :

X, a windbag. Y works hard but has sacrificed what ability he had to his cupidity and dishonesty, as well as arrogance. . . . Z has now only one trade of which he still preserves any mastery, namely, sliding out of obligations once the maximum advantage has been secured.

These bursts of scorn were followed by expressions of admiration for others :

However, you can find less well advertised but far better people even in Poona, as I have told you. Gode does fine work. . . at the BORI, and is in charge of the MSS. I have already written to you about Gokhale, who could also help you with the Bengali. . . . At Madras Raghavan's great *Catalogus Catalogorum* deserves your attention, as does Raghavan himself, one of the absolute masters of classical Sanskrit in India and one of the best-read men in Sanskrit I have met. There are many other people and places you should visit, but that can come after you arrive.

If, by some miracle, I get off to China next week, I shall be back in harness by July 1. Of course, I may be dismissed one of these days for daring to think that public opinion should be mobilized for Peace, even in my spare time. But then I shall have all the more time to devote to research. . . .

Five weeks later Kosambi had been to and returned from China. He wrote me to Calcutta, where I had arrived and was stopping over briefly. After advice on the further stages of my trip, he reported on his own. Not a word of the hoped-for manuscript; but his enthusiasm was running strong on China.

China was a revelation in many ways. The Peace Movement has two classes of delegates, tourists and workers. I was in the latter. In spite of the lack of time for sight-seeing, and even for sleep, I managed to see Chin K'e-mu, Dschi Hian-lin (*Mahāvastu* specialist), and other scholars; only the two above are Sanskritists, but the rest were im-

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pressive. The whole university atmosphere is strange to any of us who have been trained in Europe, the U.S.A., or India. Incidentally, there are not many students now for Sanskrit, but interest in modern Indian languages is rising fast. Hindi classes are popular.

The most impressive thing about China is the total change of character after the liberation : people do not bother to lock up houses at night any longer and nothing is missing. The coolie stands up and exchanges smiles with the policeman. Using the same old hand methods, land yield on the same plots has risen by twenty per cent; buildings rise up in half the time. Sanitation is greatly improved and the country well ahead of India in all ways. You can still see old China—at Hong Kong!

His last letter before we met reached me in Madras.

Bombay, July 21, 1952

Dear Ingalls,

It is clear that you are in India and will come to Poona via Madras, not via Bombay as I expected. My house is less than a furlong away from the BORI Nizam Guest House and my wife will supply you with any urgent necessities that we possess but which happen to be absent in the Guest House. I myself hope to be back the night of the 24th, Thursday. In case you call at our place before then, *beware of the dog.* He belongs to the neighbours, but has adopted us. His ear-shattering bark, unfortunately, is no worse than his bite....

Yours sincerely,

D. D. Kosambi

There followed four months during which I saw Kosambi nearly every week-end. I puzzled with him and Gokhale over the text of the anthology. I took no hand in its editing, but the three of us decided that it must be annotated and for that purpose I was chosen. As matters turned out, years later, the annotation grew into a translation; but in 1952 I was not thinking so far ahead. Most of my time with Kosambi was spent in talking of matters that were miles removed from our common endeavour. We would take all-day hikes over the hills about

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Poona and continue our conversation in the courtyard of his house, on through supper into the night.

I have never met a man with whom I disagreed on such basic questions, yet whose company I so constantly enjoyed. Kosambi was a Marxist; I am an anti-systematist and by nature conservative. Kosambi insisted that art should be subservient to social betterment; I that it must break away from political subservience in order to be art. Curiously, we loved many of the same books, often for quite different reasons, and when we found our taste to converge we found it to be strengthened. At least it was so with me; I think it was so with Kosambi also. Blake's *Milton* had always affected me by its brilliant images :

Bring me my bow of burning gold !
Bring me my arrows of desire!

The poem has affected me more deeply since my discovery that it was Kosambi's favourite. Kosambi, of course, loved it for its leading up to the revolutionary conclusion :

Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

But there must have been more than poetry to bring us together. Each of us found in the other certain qualities that he valued. Again, I can speak with certainty only of my own view. What I admired in Kosambi was his instinctive respect for facts, I would almost call it a reverence, that would come into play even when I least expected it. To listen to him theorize on Indian history you might think that he believed himself to have a complete understanding of its every turn. But no; he still had the patience to weigh on a jeweller's scale each new lot of punch-marked coins that came into his hands; he would still worry for hours over which of five manuscript variants to choose for a critical text. This side of Kosambi's character, the truly scholarly side, made no great flash in the world. Most of his acquaintances, I think, regarded it as a foible. But to Kosambi it was part of his inner morality and he was comfortable with other scholars

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only when he saw something of the same , reverence in their hearts.

I recall my departure from Poona. Kosambi rode with me down to Bombay on the "Deccan Queen". I, the American capitalist, had never travelled in India by other than second class fare. My Marxist friend insisted that I join him in his first class compartment.

For two years after my return to America letters passed between us nearly every week. Most of them concerned the text of the anthology, the difficulty of getting new photographs, and the problems of getting the text set up at the Nirnaya Sagar Press in such fashion that it could be reproduced by offset in America. But often we would throw in a paragraph or two on other affairs and sometimes a whole letter. The following was occasioned by a letter of mine giving news of my permanent appointment at Harvard and complaining of how an application for a research grant which I had supported had been turned down.

Bombay, May 23, 1953

Dear Ingalls,

Yours of the 16th reached me last night. Let me hasten to congratulate you, and even more Harvard University, on your permanency. It is not likely they can get any one else for a job like yours and you will carry on with credit.... As for your doing anything un-American during the next thirty years, I have grave doubts; learning Sanskrit as well as you have is un-American enough for one lifetime.

What you say about the grant comes painfully home in several ways. Our fertile but whimsical *kāmadhenu*, the government, can be milked for streams of cash if one does it on a sufficiently large and useless scale. The man who needs 500 for some really useful work is a common swindler; a scheme for 10,000 might get through with heavy backing. In the hundred thousands it becomes routine; and by the million, you not only get everything you ask for, but are certainly a public benefactor, provided the money all goes down the drain.

The letter ends by complaining of a visiting American historian:

In three hours of cross-examination I could not get a solitary definite statement from him on any point in the

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> history of India of any period.... Your country *does* need some real propaganda to counteract this kind, just as we need a lunatic asylum for curing most of our lads who want to go to America.

Toward the end of 1953 an argument arose between Kosambi and me that I feared might undo our joint undertaking and destroy our recent friendship. As events proved, the undertaking was concluded, and the friendship ripened into maturity.

Kosambi had begun writing his Introduction to Vidyākara's anthology. He sent it to me in two instalments. With the first instalment of four sections I was delighted, for he had managed to ascertain Vidyākara's date and place with accuracy, and by this means was able to assign dates for the first time to a number of Sanskrit authors whose verses the anthology contained. He warned me on November 5th that "the next four sections, mailed to you from Bombay this morning by air, will appear less agreeable to you than the first". His foreboding proved correct, not because of the Marxist theory of Sanskrit literature which he there set forth—I was prepared for that —but because of the passionate denunciations of non-Sanskrit literature into which he digressed.

In this first draft I found on pages 16 to 18 a diatribe against the detective stories of Mickey Spillane, which Kosambi took as typifying the decadence of a socially destructive United States. In a footnote he had added the comment : "I am told that his books were made compulsory reading for the Army at one time, to inculcate the true martial spirit of an atomic age, which defends human values by mass extermination."

I replied by a long letter of criticism. I was willing to print any theory of literature that he wished to frame, but I insisted that "the fireworks must come out". As slightly abbreviated, the conclusion of my letter was as follows :

> As regards compulsory reading in the U.S. Army, I served in the Army for three years and never heard of compulsory reading. Actually it was my impression that a good many of my fellow soldiers were unable to read. Be this as it may, it does not raise the credibility of a scholarly text to have such bits of propaganda dropped around in the Introduction. Again, the diatribe against Mickey Spillane fails

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to produce the effect you wish. It reads like a Jain pamphlet on the horrors of fox-hunting.

It may appear curious to you that I should take exception to one passage rather than another in this last instalment. Certainly most of my colleagues, if they were asked, would say : "You're already printing a communist interpretation. What more is there to stop at?" For every day more of us fall into this antinomy. Here it is communism or truth. And in the other half of the world it is communism or falsity. Perhaps it is a Quixotic gesture to swim against this stream, but I intend to do so.

A week later I heard from Kosambi : "Your blast of the 21st was waiting for me at home last night." After countering most of my objections he rephrased my conclusion :

Let us put it as follows: The world is divided into three groups : (1) swearing by Marxism, (2) swearing at Marxism, (3) indifferent, i.e. just swearing, but forced by the crisis to shift to 1 or 2. I belong to 1, you and your colleagues to 2. Under the circumstances, what is the most effective draft of the Introduction to be?

I have no intention of propagandizing (for which there would be far better media, surely) nor of changing my line. The point, however, is not to prove Marxism or support it, but to use a certain well-proved line of approach to draw conclusions from such meagre evidence as exists....

But on the passage I had cried out against most vehemently he did not insist.

Pages 16-18 are the real sore point, as far as I can see. They can be rewritten, and shall be rather than argue the matter out here. Incidentally, page *three* will receive an added paragraph, for the *jātivrajyā* grows upon me with better understanding of its stanzas.

We both loved the *jātivrajyā*, the section of the anthology that furnishes those inimitable miniatures of village and field in ancient India. As I look back it seems to me that the sober vision of the Pāla poets forced a corresponding sobriety upon us. Kosambi agreed to give up the fireworks; I agreed that he might print whatever social message he could elicit from the Sanskrit poetry. Such minor flares as "one may see this for himself in the new China" I allowed to stand.

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I find only one recurrence of disagreement between us about the Introduction, but it was mild. For its history I have only Kosambi's plea without a copy of my reply. Some of his words are worth saving for the picture they give of what he admired and what he hated.

> On revisions, page 5, line 4 from bottom, about control of the press: would you agree to a footnote about press, mass-produced magazines, comics, radio, television? I see no reason why a television, radio, or movie script should not be as good literature as anything Shakespeare wrote. Yet, in all my experience, the sole occasion on which the chance was taken was the movie *Juarez* and in particular two scenes, in the first of which Juarez (Paul Muni) defines democracy to Porfirio Diaz and in the second Juarez addresses the ambassadors who suggest that Maximilian be pardoned in the name of mercy and civilization. Magnificently acted, the words by themselves had a rugged simplicity which could have fitted into anything from classical antiquity down and graced the context. Now is it only a degraded popular taste which reduces great works of literature to comics? Who controls the outfit? I recall a take off in *Punch* some years ago which gave *Macbeth* as a U.S. style comic, and though it must have seemed funny to the educated British conservative who usually appreciates *Punch* humour, it was exactly what a publisher of comics would have published without thinking that anything was wrong. The real cause of the ruin seems to me the position of advertising, and there is no question of who controls that.... What should be said here? I feel that something must be said in any case.... Draft your own version of what I mean.

I was not quite sure whether Kosambi was pulling my leg—forcing me to reply to an argument where he knew that my prejudices would agree largely with his own—or whether he was ingenuous. There was no doubt, at least, of the depth of his feeling or of the cleanliness of his scorn. I could only reply that the matter was not pertinent to an edition of a Sanskrit text.

For the rest we worked smoothly, distinguishing our scholarship from our emotional involvements. A year and a half later the Introduction was finished, the printing of the text was nearing

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completion, and I had begun to transform my annotations into a translation.

If the year 1955 was a happy one for the anthology, it was far from happy for Kosambi in other respects. The arthritis, from which he had suffered for several years, worsened. The ailment was not only painful but infuriating, for Kosambi had a strong physique which he had always pushed to the utmost. Among his keenest pleasures had been the long hikes over the Poona hills. The hikes were now curtailed. The hand of sickness stretched farther, to two of the persons he loved most dearly. In 1955 his mother died. His sister, falling ill, was to be taken from him the next year. Amid these griefs Kosambi's energy drove him as hard as ever. In the summer he left for Finland and Russia. He was away for two months and my letters to him accumulated at Poona. He wrote me directly after his return.

Poona, August 13, 1955

Dear Ingalls,

I got back this morning from Helsinki and Moscow. The USSR Academy of Sciences had invited me last year, as you know. This year the invitation was especially repeated at Helsinki and I went off to attend their conference on atomic energy for peaceful uses. They have actually begun: and have had a 5,000 kilowatt power station in operation, the current being used for household supply as well as industry, for over a year. Thereafter I gave a couple of lectures on various Indological subjects and got my medical treatment. The treatment was long overdue and at the end gave a lot of relief, though not a complete cure as yet.

All this sounds more impressive than it was. Small matters are not so well organized in the USSR as the big projects. The people are fundamentally easy-going, even slipshod, just like us Indians, though very nice. The war has left a mark upon every family that I managed to meet: the people as well as their government really desire peace. But for all that, my personal affairs were in a mess. All the scholars were on holiday, summer vacations having begun. Even so, the orientalists came back to hear my lectures, the last of which was held on their foundation anniversary. They were rather shaken by the harsh things I had to say

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about their pseudo-Marxist scholars (or pseudo-scholars), but the persons concerned to whom I finally tracked down most of the nonsense emanating from the Oriental Institute were not quite convinced; one ended on a note of personal abuse, saying to friends in private conversation that Kosambi's Marxism was only skin-deep. This meant a lack of argument against the specific defects that I had to point out in public sessions. I could only reply that I had a pretty thick skin; perhaps I was all skin.

In any case, the Sanskritists in the old line are all dead and the continuity has been broken. They were mostly based upon Leningrad, where I hadn't time, strength, or inclination to go. Only Kalyanov is left, the rest being quite new to the game and rather poor in calibre from their own accounts. However, they are interested in Indology and if they turn their minds to it with their characteristic national energy might sweep the field once again. At present they don't even know what is being done in other countries. My own reprints had not reached the proper scholars nor the libraries when I went there. Some of these reprints and the Bhartṛhari edition had lain unnoticed for five years with the biochemist who had agreed to take them from India. I called on him and recovered them. Finally, there isn't a library I could get at with the resources and ease of use of Widener [i.e. the Harvard College Library]. What wouldn't I give, except giving up the Peace Movement, to spend a few months working away at Widener again!

Gokhale will call tomorrow. He has sent all your notes and letters to be here with Maya,[1] except the last 100 stanzas on which he is still working. Studying the dossier, it seems that you have reached agreement on most points, while I have gotten very badly out of touch with the work. However, getting back into harness shouldn't be too difficult....

I am grateful for the condolences. It was painful not to be present when Mother passed away, but the journey, though physically just possible, would in fact have been killing for me too.

Shall we drop the remaining formality now and come to the real personal names on both sides. You have been signing yourself Dan. I am, to my few friends,

Baba.

1. Kosambi's daughter.

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I have proposed here to describe only the forming of a friendship. I should be ungrateful, however, not to add a word on the benefit I received from it, for Baba was to become the best critic I ever had. From 1956 onward the pattern of the criticism of our letters was reversed: where I had been criticizing his introduction and text; he was now criticizing the drafts of my translation. I valued his praise as actors are said to value acclaim in the city of Boston; if they can get a round of applause in a Boston theatre, they figure on a full year's run anywhere else. And I benefited from his ridicule, for Baba was as cruel to my occasional flights of mysticism as I had been to his Marxist digressions. My nature did not change under criticism any more than his did; but my style was chastened. In all the years we knew each other we never came to agree on theory. We agreed, however, well enough on the meaning of a phrase that I find each of us using in letters that happened to cross: "an honest job, well done". I had said it of his finished text; he had expressed it as his hope of what my infant translation would become.

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D.D. Kosambi: Father of Scientific Indian History

DALE RIEPE

What a scholar does with mythology, ethnology, anthropology and archaeology will give a crucial clue as to what he is going to do with history. Kosambi tackles these disciplines in a materialistic way right off the bat. There are no mysterious digressions into uncheckable and unexplorable realms. Mircea Eliade, for example, a well-known student of mythology, claims that:

> The creation of *the* World being the pre-eminent instance of creation, the cosmogony becomes the exemplary model for "creation" of every kind.[1]

One should note, first of all, that there is no evidence that any world was ever created (by human or divine agency). But that is of only slight interest here. The important point is that the model for creation in man's life has been the creation of his own kind in the female. To stretch out into some unknown if not unknowable past and pretend to find a model is of course to find a model of the unknown. The unknown may have a model, but we obviously do not know what it is. Therefore to speak of it as Eliade does is simply an attempt to look profound through mystification. Is it too much to ask to begin with human experience and look outwards instead of beginning in some transcendent sphere and then returning to the human? Human productive life is a fine beginning for the creation myths.

1. Eliade, *Myth and Reality* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1964), p. 21.

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Idealistic explanation has been an important human endeavour, but there is little excuse to practise it in the second half of the twentieth century. Kosambi shows himself aware of this in all his later writings.

More recently Eliade has been working on the origin, meaning, and significance of Shamanism throughout the world.[2] We previously saw that he believed that the world had a creation. Now we see that :

> . . . nothing justifies the supposition that, during the hundreds of thousands of years that preceded the earliest Stone Age, humanity did not have a religious life as intense and as various as in the succeeding periods.[3]

What does justify the supposition that it did? What does warrant this argument from ignorance? This is comparable to the famous non-argument for the existence of God which goes like this :

A. If you believe in God, prove His existence.
B. I do not have to prove His existence, you prove His non-existence.

Eliade also uses the idealist technique introduced by Pitrim Sorokin and George Sarton which avoids discovering anything basic or primary upon which to build an edifice of explanation. Eliade consequently states that :

> . . . nowhere in the history of religions do we encounter "primordial" phenomena; for history has been everywhere changing, recasting, enriching, or impoverishing religious concepts, mythological creations, rites, techniques of ecstasy.[4]

Yes, it is all so complicated, as Joseph Schumpeter used to say to his economics classes at Harvard University. If we can get it complicated enough, then we have an excuse to turn to mysticism. One trouble with primordial notions is that so much depends upon who is going to pick them. If it is a materialist, the

2. Eliade, *Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, tr. Willard R. Trask (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1970).
3. *Shamanism*, p. 11.
4. Ibid.

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primordials turn out to be material in nature; if an idealist, they are found to be spiritual or conceptual. As Sarton, the historian of science, says: "It is easy enough to explain some facts retrospectively, especially if one be free to select the convenient ones."[5] On the contrary, it is never easy to explain *anything* as parents and teachers have known for some time. Sarton presents this as an argument against the use of economic explanations in mathematics. He would rather have no explanation than that it should be economic and hence material.

One may also contrast Kosambi's work with that of the widely known German Indologist, Heinrich Zimmer (1890-1943). Zimmer's anti-scientific approach may be seen throughout his work, but an instance of it as associated with art and religion is here cited :

> The aim of Indian thought has always been to learn the secret of the entanglement (of *māyā* with that knowledge that is "just beyond our ken") and, if possible, to cut through into a reality outside and beneath the emotional and intellectual convolutions that enwrap our conscious being.[6]

What are Zimmer's presuppositions in this passage? First, he accepts at face value the Vedāntic doctrine (or Platonic) that *māyā* has some ontological status. Second, he thinks that we can "cut through into reality" (where are we while we are cutting?) Third, he assumes that "our conscious being" can be separated from "emotional and intellectual convolutions". This is clearly an idealistic exploration in its disregard for the unity of the individual and has no basis in biology or psychology, not to say sociology. From such an inauspicious beginning there is little to be hoped for in the realm of the scientific explanation of myth. One might apologize for Zimmer's irrational stand by maintaining that he had at least preserved interesting Indian myths. But in response to that one must point out that what he has done is to hopelessly confuse his readers by mixing the myths with idealistic,

5. Dirk Struik quoting Sarton in his review of *The Study of the History of Mathematics, Science and Society*, i, no. 3 (Spring 1937), 426.

6. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1962), p. 26.

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irrational Vedāntism when he should be giving materialistic explanations.

Kosambi, on the other hand, with his feet in the productive process and his fingers on the facts of social history, gives us viable explanations of myths, religion, and philosophy. In *Myth and Reality : Studies in the Formation of Indian Culture* he conceives his task to be :

> to trace the primitive roots of some Indian myths and ritual that survived the beginning of civilization and indeed survive to this day. This is not too difficult in a country where contemporary society is composed of elements that preserve the indelible marks of almost every historical stage. The neglect of such analysis leads to a ridiculous distortion of Indian history and to a misunderstanding of Indian culture, not compensated by subtle theology or the boasts of having risen above crass materialism.[7]

What Kosambi began to accomplish for the history of Indian religion and philosophy had been earlier initiated for the study of the Aegean by George Thomson[8] of the University of Birmingham. Whereas Thomson had a partial forerunner in F.M. Cornford, Kosambi looked around the Indian scene in vain. Perhaps some would mention M. N. Roy as a counterpart of Cornford, yet Roy's contribution was to idealize European mechanical materialism. At worst he diverted research from histomat[9] principles by maintaining that it should not be based on social relations but on the "rockbottom of human nature (which) antedates the economic and political organization of society".[10] Roy got off to a bad start by failing to carefully read Marx and Engels. It seems nearly certain that he never read *Capital,* nor did he read the letters of Marx and Engels. Indeed, a list of the classics of histomat that Roy did not read would be considerably longer than the

7. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality* (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1962), p. 2.

8. Beginning with *Aeschylus and Athens* (1941) and continuing with *Studies in Ancient Greek Society,* i, *The Prehistoric Aegean* (1949), ii, *The First Philosophers* (1955). (All by Lawrence and Wishart, London).

9. This stands for historical materialist or historical materialism; its parallel form is diamat for dialectical materialist or dialectical materialism.

10. Roy, *Reason, Romanticism, and Revolution* (Renaissance Publishers Ltd., Calcutta, 1952), ii, 187.

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list that he did read. No student of Marx or Engels could have penned Roy's caricature of Marx's position :

> Marx found in Hegelian dialectics a philosophical support for his theory of revolution. Therefore, dialectics became his sole criterion for judging all other philosophies: and dialectics is admittedly an idealistic conception. Revolutions are not brought about by men; they take place of necessity, that is to say, are predetermined. The dialectical Materialism of Marx, therefore, is materialist only in name; dialectics being its cornerstone, it is essentially an idealistic system. No wonder that it disowned the heritage of the eighteenth century scientific naturalism and fought against the humanist Materialism of Feuerbach and his followers.[11]

This is a model of pithy, encyclopaedic ignorance of Marxism unmatched even by Pitrim Sorokin, the Russian-American sociologist of Harvard University. To refute it properly, beginning even as late as Condorcet, would require another paper as long as this one. One comment is worth making to indicate Roy's misapprehension. In fighting against religious superstition Roy did noble work in India, but in his ignorance of the history of science he assumed that to be determined implies predetermination. That every effect has a cause is determinism; that every effect has been programmed on a cosmic scale in advance is predeterminism. The first is the view of science; the second, the view of theology. Every religious man at least knows that Marx did not accept the theological view. Roy was not a profound scholar although for most of his life a sincere and hard-working propagandist for bourgeois humanism.[12]

My point is that Kosambi did not get any help from M. N. Roy. To never have read Roy on historical materialism is a kind of unknowingly consummatory experience.

It is important in assessing the contribution of Kosambi to understand just how far he advanced relative to his peers. So far as I am aware, the most illustrious of them are Joseph

11. Ibid. p. 186.

12. Roy evidently failed to observe "the tendency of the embryonic development of materialism in the seam of religious superstitions". See Kaun Feng and Lin Lü-shih, "Thought of the Yin Dynasty and the Western Chou", *Chinese Studies in Philosophy*, ii, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall-Winter 1970/71), 38.

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Needham of Cambridge University and George Thomson. Needham has brought scientific order out of Chinese history and Thomson has done it for Greek. What was needed was someone to do the same for India.

Thomson says that Cornford "(i)n relation to the pre-Socratics...was a materialist, in relation to the Post-Socratics an idealist".[13] A crucial cause of this was that Cornford followed Durkheim's doctrine of collective representations. In essence this was the hypothesis that the structure of human thought, such as logical categories, classes, concepts of space, time, force, and causality are projections on the external world of the structure of human society.[14] This appears plausible. But Thomson raises two questions:

> ...if the development of thought is determined by the development of society, what determines the development of society? And in what relation does civilized thought stand to the structure of civilized society? Faced with these questions, which cannot be answered without recognizing the class struggle, Durkheim was utterly at loss, and only succeeded in confusing the issue, which Marx and Engels had stated so plainly in the preceding generation.[15]

Kosambi was not lucky enough to have a predecessor who was a materialist in relation to pre-Buddhist India, and an idealist in relation to post-Buddhist India. He was on his own. How he was able to proceed is a story worth telling. That Kosambi did go ahead applying the principles of histomat makes us for ever indebted to him. Otherwise the demystification of the history of Indian religion and philosophy would have had only the brave voice of Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. Kosambi became the first academically trained Indian scholar to apply historical materialist method to Indian history.

Kosambi's method of working is well-illustrated in "Social and Economic Aspect of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*".[16] This is a masterpiece of histomat synopsis, interpretation, and demystification. It

13. Thomson, *The First Philosophers*, p. 171.
14. Ibid. p. 170.
15. Ibid.
16. In *Myth and Reality*.

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demonstrates in history what mechanics could demonstrate in celestial science once the nineteenth century idealist historicizing ended. According to Kosambi, Kṛṣṇa reveals that he is the creator and destroyer of all things; that he has devoured all members of the armies about to fight. The moral of the *Gītā* is that: so long as you have faith in ME, all sins are forgiven. If duty calls, kill your brother without passion. Such calculated treachery, Kosambi maintains, is also expounded in the *Arthaśāstra*,[17] the leading Indian political treatise in ancient times, and a work that makes *The Prince* of Machiavelli read like Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*.

Kosambi asks why was the *Gītā* interpolated into the *Mahābhārata* in the first place? His answer is that the lower classes were the audience of the recitations of the heroic lays of ancient war. The epic served as a vehicle of propaganda for any doctrine that the *brāhmaṇas* wished to insert. The second question he asks is why was Kṛṣṇa chosen to expound the new gospel of the ruling class? His answer is that it was precisely at this time that the Kṛṣṇa cult was rising in popularity and was associated with the syncretic Nārāyaṇa. This Nārāyaṇa who sleeps in his chamber in the midst of waters may be traced to the Sumerian flood-creation myth and later appears among the Jews as Noah. Kṛṣṇa and not some other god was required because Indra (until then chief of the gods) had lost lustre as a result of intervening Buddhism which had denied *yajña*. Indra, king of the gods, was pre-eminent only during the pastoral bronze age. The ascendency of Kṛṣṇa begins around 800 B.C. in the Panjab. After this time he moved south and east as he became useful for syncretic movements. The Deccan Yādavas, for example, traced their genealogy to Kṛṣṇa in order to raise the chiefs of a local clan above the surrounding people.[18]

Kṛṣṇa is a synthesis of the following life-like and god-like features: (1) a mischievous and beloved shepherd lad and (2) a virile husband of many women (local goddesses, each in her own right spending the night with him, the "husband", thus easing

17. It is important that Kosambi regards the *Arthaśāstra* as post-Buddhistic (*c.* 321-296 B.C.).

18. "Social and Economic Aspects...", op. cit., p. 27.

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the transition from local to regional religion). This *Aufhebung*[19] may also be seen in the marriage of Śiva and Pārvati, which was supplemented by the hermaphrodite (a god-goddess with one female and one male breast, etc.) just to prevent any possible separation, that is to say, return to the local religious interpretation. The Nāga cult was absorbed by placing the cobra around Śiva's neck. Earlier, Śiva was seated on Nandī the Bull, an earlier pastoral divinity. We can see from this that the function of the *Gītā* from the fourth to the sixth centuries and during the Gupta period of expanding village settlement (with the expansion of agriculture) was the centralization of scattered religious functions.

The *Gītā* could do little, Kosambi maintains, about reconciling differences that began to appear at the end of the reign of Harsa of Kanauj. Even the Hari-Hara cult (with its image of half Śiva and half Viṣṇu) fell out of fashion as commodity output dropped. Declining economy brought about sharp divisions. Syncretism turned into the *smārta-vaiṣṇava* struggle: between the traditionalist or Vedāntist vs. Vaiṣṇava doctrines, including that of the followers of Rāmānuja, Madhvācārya, and later Vallabhas and Caitanyas. According to Kosambi:

> Fusion and tolerance become impossible when the crisis deepens, when there is not enough of the surplus product to go around, and the synthetic method does not lead to increased production.[20]

This reference to the economic relations of religion does not imply that Kosambi is an economic determinist. Like any scientist he is of course a determinist. And his determinism extends over the entire field of knowledge, including society and history. To be a determinist means that one believes that every event has at least one cause and that every effect has a cause. This view is always rightly associated with materialism because it is the materialist who defends this position in the human as well as natural world. Even the positivist (logical as well as Comteian) believes in determinism in natural science but is at best unsure

19. As in Hegel, sublation, cancellation.
20. "Social and Economic Aspects. . ." *op. cit.*, p. 91.

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about it in social life or history. He has a split world with determinism in the body and indeterminism in the mind and history.

> According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase.... (also of great importance are) political forms...constitutions...juridicial forms...religious views...[21]

Kosambi is a cultural determinist, but not an economic determinist. He knows that economic considerations are enormously important even in the explanation of religions which are themselves part of the struggle for existence.[22] Yet there is always an influence of the "higher" on the "lower". A cultural determinist will likely be a histomat which indeed Kosambi was. Emphasis is put upon the productive base as a source of explanation rather than put on the superstructure. It is a matter of chronology and other modes of priority. Even when religion and philosophy are alleged to "live a life of their own", the power of the base is a constant reminder that sudden changes from this quarter may occur and thus topple the old relations. This ought to make us pause when intellectual historians give superlative honour to monumental ideas, as may be found in E. O. Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being* where the idea of the Platonic form is traced idealistically for hundreds of years. Another idealist historian is M. Rostovtzeff, author of the famous *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, where this learned man states:

> The Hellenistic genius might have created more than in effect it did. Its generative force was undermined too early in its development. Though it never became sterile and senile...it was handicapped in its natural development by external causes.[23]

21. F. Engels, Letter to J. Bloch, London, September 21/22, 1890, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1958), ii, 488.

22. See Paul Radin, "Economic Factors in Primitive Religion", *Science and Society*, i, no. I (Fall, 1936), 310f.

23. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1941, ii, 1311.

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Evidently the Greek genius is a mysterious, internal entity, such that if allowed to unfold, untouched by external circumstances (such as invasions and influences from the East), it would bloom like the radiant lotuses mentioned so often in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Thomson informs us that the Greek "genius" was greatly dependent upon Mesopotamia and Egypt, and in dealing with India Kosambi points out just what effects the external circumstances have. He thus provides us with explanation instead of edification and obfuscation. But unless one is already a historical materialist it is difficult for one to see that the approach of Kosambi and Rostovtzeff is separated by more than a continent. "Introjective idealism"[24] even when performed by a scholar with ten honorary degrees cannot lead us to knowledge of the causes of religious and philosophical beliefs and practices.

After this digression, let us return to Kosambi's analysis of the *Gītā*. During the feudal period in India it served a most useful function that was required because of the curtailed and strained production. It formulated the notion of *bhakti*, or personal devotion.

With feudalism came the chain of personal loyalty, binding retainer to chief, tenant to lord, and baron to king or emperor. The same relationship is found among the *samurai* in Japan from the Kamakura period and somewhat earlier in China.[25] Indian loyalty was not abstract, but served land ownership, military activity, tax collection, and the conversion of local produce into commodities. This system was only possible after the sixth century and was based on the key notion of *sāmanta*, a term meaning neighbourhood ruler until 532. By 592 it meant feudal baron. The new barons were personally responsible to the king, and part of the tax-gathering mechanism. Earlier the *Manusmṛti*

24. Coined by Sandor Ferenczi, "The Problem of Acceptance of Unpleasant Ideas—Advances in Knowledge of the Sense of Reality", *The Theory and Technique of Psycho-Analysis* (The Hogarth Press Ltd., London, 1950), p. 373.

25. "All feudal ethics, such as loyalty, filial piety, moral integrity, faithfulness, propriety, righteousness, incorruptibility, and a sense of shame are totally and completely in the service of the landlord class." Kuan Feng and Wu Ch'uan-chi, "Comments on Comrade Wu Han's Theory of Ethics" (1966), *Chinese Studies in History*, iii, no. 2 (Winter 1969/71), 150.

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had no *sāmantas,* but the king administered everything himself directly or through agents who had no independent status. Feudalism from below consisted of a class of people at the village level who had special rights over the land (cultivation, occupation, or hereditary ownership). To hold such a society together the best religion is one emphasizing *bhakti,* personal faith. Marco Polo relates that in the thirteenth century the seigneurs in India actually threw themselves on the king's funeral pyre. By some transmogrification this was replaced later by *sutee.* No earlier tribal chief, says Kosambi, could have expected such loyalty. By the twelfth century the burdened peasantry was paying not only for the extensive palaces, but for the ornate temples as well, indicating the great wealth for which India has been justly famous.

Kosambi's work on the *Gītā* is a major contribution to the understanding of Indian history. One may marvel that it was contributed by a mathematician and statistician as well as an archaeologist and numismatist. Instead of mathematics leading him into the mental jungle of idealism, it made him appreciate quantified materialism. Indologists will come to appreciate D. D. Kosambi more each decade for he set Indian history on a scientific path.

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The Relationship of Neolithic and Later Settled Communities with those of Late Stone Age Hunters and Gatherers in Peninsular India

RAYMOND AND BRIDGET ALLCHIN

In several provinces of the Indian subcontinent during the course of the past two decades settlements belonging to the Neolithic-Chalcolithic period have been excavated. In many cases it is now possible to compare the culture sequence from site to site, and even from region to region, with the result that a single comparative inter-regional sequence is emerging. This is still far from complete, but many of the main outlines are now clear. Further, with the recent addition of numbers of C14 dates these outlines are coming into sharper focus, and we can now see in broadest terms the end, the middle and perhaps even the beginning of the Neolithic-Chalcolithic period. Thus in Baluchistan (Pakistan), the earliest settlement so far dated by C14 goes back to the first half of the fourth millennium B.C., and in the Indus plains—in Sind and Panjab—comparable dates range from the beginning of the third millennium onwards; in the southern parts of the peninsula the earliest dates so far obtained belong to the second half of the third millennium B.C. The period which we are broadly calling Neolithic-Chalcolithic may now be taken to have ended shortly after 1000 B.C. with the diffusion of iron working in most parts of north India and Pakistan, and in large areas of the peninsula.

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When we turn to examine the evidence for the Late Stone Age we find a very different situation. Industries of this period are widely distributed throughout India where they have been reported from every province except those in the Himalayan foothills. They are definitely present in Pakistan, and Ceylon has a distinctive Late Stone Age culture which has been discussed by one of us at some length elsewhere.[1] The distinguishing features of the Indian Late Stone Age industries are their small size, the production of blades by a well defined and highly specialized process which we shall describe below, and the production of various small reworked tools of characteristic form known, somewhat misleadingly, as lunates, geometric microliths, etc. It is highly probable that this third feature is also symptomatic of the use of the bow and arrow in hunting. On this account a more general term for composite points and barbs seems to us preferable, as it avoids minor typological distinctions whose significance we cannot evaluate and stresses the functional unity of the whole group of artefacts. In general these characteristics are shared with the Late Stone Age industries of Central and Southern Africa and with the stone industries of Mesolithic Europe and Western Asia. They are also shared to a remarkable extent with the stone industries of many of the Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures of India. Our purpose in this paper is to discuss the period of overlap between the later phases of the Late Stone Age and the Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures as a whole, and to consider what, if any, relationship existed between these two cultural entities. Taken as a whole the Late Stone Age industries show evidence both of evolution in technological terms from those of the Middle Stone Age which precedes them, and of substantial external influences probably from a general north-westerly direction. They appear in many regions to span a considerable period of time. Rock shelters which have been excavated in Ceylon and Central India, and the open air site of Langhnaj in Gujarat, all of which contain substantial Late Stone Age deposits, unhappily yield no Middle Stone Age material, and therefore give us no indication of the

1. B. Allchin, "The Late Stone Age of Ceylon", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, lxxxviii (1958), 179-201.

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relationship of these two cultural phases. However, these sites show a consistent pattern. In each case in the lower levels there is a Late Stone Age culture with a highly developed stone industry, but without pottery, metals or other material evidence of contact with more advanced cultures. The stone industry continues into higher and later levels with the addition of small quantities of pottery and objects of bronze or iron such as arrowheads, knives and mere fragments, all of which are clearly the result of contact with more advanced peoples. The pottery is often in very small fragments, but where it has been possible to study it, it appears to resemble that from neighbouring Neolithic-Chalcolithic, Iron Age or later sites. This suggests that it must have been obtained through trade or other contacts rather than made by the Late Stone Age people themselves.

As yet there are very few C14 dates for Late Stone Age sites. One from Adamgarh in Central India gives a date of approximately 5500 B.C. for Late Stone Age levels.[2] This is substantially earlier than any dates so far obtained for Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures in the sub-continent. The other few dates for Late Stone Age sites fall well within the period covered by Neolithic-Chalcolithic and later cultures. Other categories of evidence, albeit circumstantial, in our opinion point to Late Stone Age cultures being established in many parts of India and having developed marked regional characteristics before the appearance of Neolithic-Chalcolithic settlements. In this connection it is worth noting the marked parallelism between the Indian Late Stone Age industries particularly in Western and Central India, and the Zarzian industry from the Zagros mountains in Eastern Iraq, which continued from the eleventh to the ninth millennium B.C.[3] Not only does archaeological evidence indicate that these cultures continued to flourish contemporaneously with those of settled food producing communities, but Indian literature also

2. The authors gratefully acknowledge permission to refer to R. v. Joshi's paper "Late Mesolithic Culture in Central India" (in press) giving a short account of the excavations at Adamgarh.

3. D. Garrod, "The Palaeolithic of Southern Kurdistan: Excavations in the Caves of Zarzi and Hazar Merd", *American School of Prehistoric Research: Bulletin*, no. 6 (1930), 8-43.

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throughout the early historic and medieval periods makes repeated references to the existence of tribal people living in forest regions, and culturally distinct from the city dwellers and peasantry of the plains. The names and geographical location of many of these tribes make it clear that they are ancestral to tribal people surviving into modern times, such as the Bhils, and Saora (Śavara), some of whom still live at least in part by hunting, collecting and primitive agriculture. These literary sources suggest a continuous and well-established relationship between communities at different cultural and technological levels, sometimes close enough to be described as symbiotic. It must be assumed therefore, on the basis of the limited evidence available, that the most refined skills of stone working which were needed to make the characteristic tools of the Late Stone Age declined as iron became available through trade and other contacts. But certain other evidence such as stray finds of rather crude artefacts made of bottle glass, and artefacts of the Late Stone Age type in historical contexts are suggestive of more prolonged survivals of the stone working tradition in certain remote localities. The way of life of the Late Stone Age peoples clearly continued in many wider regions with only minor modifications due to the introduction of new techniques and materials, and in some cases it is still continued by modern tribal peoples.

Such tribal peoples, as distinct from village communities, are now in a state of retreat, but in recent times they occupied large areas of Central India and the Eastern and Western Ghats. They included groups who lived basically by hunting and gathering, those who practised various forms of primitive agriculture such as slash and burn cultivation, and those who specialized wholly or partly in pastoralism, and who were in some cases nomadic. Moreover, the lower levels of the Indian social hierarchy contain today many communities living on the periphery of modern villages and towns; these are known to have recently abandoned an independent tribal way of life, but carry on certain traditional occupations such as making baskets, mats which in many parts of India are used for sleeping and other objects which they can sell to townspeople. They also fulfil various types of new functions as labourers in the context of rural or urban life. Many

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more depressed castes and groups throughout the Indian subcontinent reflect the same processes as have taken place in the past. Some of these groups certainly represent the relics of fully settled communities overcome by political or military conquest, but others represent primitive peoples who have succumbed to the economic pressures of expanding agriculture and industry.

It is to the lasting credit of the late D. D. Kosambi that he recognized, perhaps more clearly than any of his countrymen had done before, the extent to which such depressed or peripheral social groups constituted "priceless evidence for the interpretation of some ancient record or archaeological find; their survival as backward groups also furnishes the real problem for explanation in the light of historical development".[4] It is also to his credit that he recognized in the people on his own backdoorstep in Poona the presence of this evidence, and that from his observations he formulated one of the fundamental propositions of Indian social history:

> The entire course of Indian history shows tribal elements being fused into a general society. This phenomenon which lies at the very foundation of the most striking Indian social feature, namely caste, is also the great basic fact of ancient Indian history. The different methods whereby the different elements were formed into a society or absorbed into existing society are prime ethnic material for any real historian.[5]

Kosambi himself recognized the potential value of this hypothesis in the interpretation of archaeological evidence, and this led him towards prehistory. His restless enthusiasm took him into the field, and one can only applaud his wish to obtain data at first hand, but he was reluctant to recognize the value of orthodox archaeological methods, particularly those of his contemporaries. Perhaps this was partly because during his lifetime Indian archaeology was only beginning to yield the type of information he sought. It is unfortunate therefore that his archaeological thinking often appears as the weakest part of his arguments. Had he lived longer, advances in archaeological methods and interpretation, in the world in general and in India in parti-

4. D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956), pp. 7-8.

5. Ibid. p. 25.

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cular, might have supplied him with the material to substantiate his hypothesis even more fully than he hoped. In addition one may speculate as to what use Kosambi would have made of the new approach to the study of human society, proposed by the structural anthropologists.

Surveying those regions of the sub-continent for which we can claim to have a reasonably clear outline of the general cultural sequence, we see that the direct evidence of contact between settled peoples and Late Stone Age hunter-gatherers, provided by pottery and metal objects found at sites of the latter, is as yet very slender. The number of objects found and their fragmentary and indeterminate nature still make precise comparisons impossible; the evidence is merely indicative. There is, however, another area of material culture which lends itself to comparison. It is notable that the stone blade industries of all the settled Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures which have been systematically studied, ranging from the Harappan to the southern Neolithic, are based upon a common, highly specialized series of techniques. The stone industry which characterizes the Late Stone Age cultures of the greater part of the sub-continent is based upon the same series of techniques with certain minor modifications and refinements. The only exception to this is a group of the Late Stone Age industries confined to Ceylon and the extreme south of India, which employ a different series of basic techniques in addition to those used further north. For the purpose of this discussion this can be discounted as a local exception to the general situation.

Before going further we must pause to examine briefly the technological processes which form the essential basis of the stone industries of both groups of cultures. The first process is the production of blades from carefully prepared cores. The blades are then used without further preparation or reworked to make various more specialized tools, including composite points and barbs. A blade may be defined as a long narrow flake with more or less parallel sides, and one or more ridges on the upper surface which have been formed by the removal of previous flakes or blades in the same direction, and which are also approximately parallel to the sides. In general the length of the blade exceeds

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the width, and the width exceeds the thickness, but far more significant is the technique of manufacture which is the real distinguishing feature. It is only possible to make blades from materials which give a clean concoidal fracture. The choice is therefore limited to the various forms of cryptocrystalline silica, such as agate, carnelian, jasper, etc., rock crystal where it is available, and sometimes quartz and exceptionally fine-grained quartzite. This technique allows for the most economical use of good quality raw material and the rapid production of a number of almost identical artefacts. In order to produce blades a core has to be carefully prepared (Fig. 1). This is done by flaking down a piece of suitable raw material to a shape from

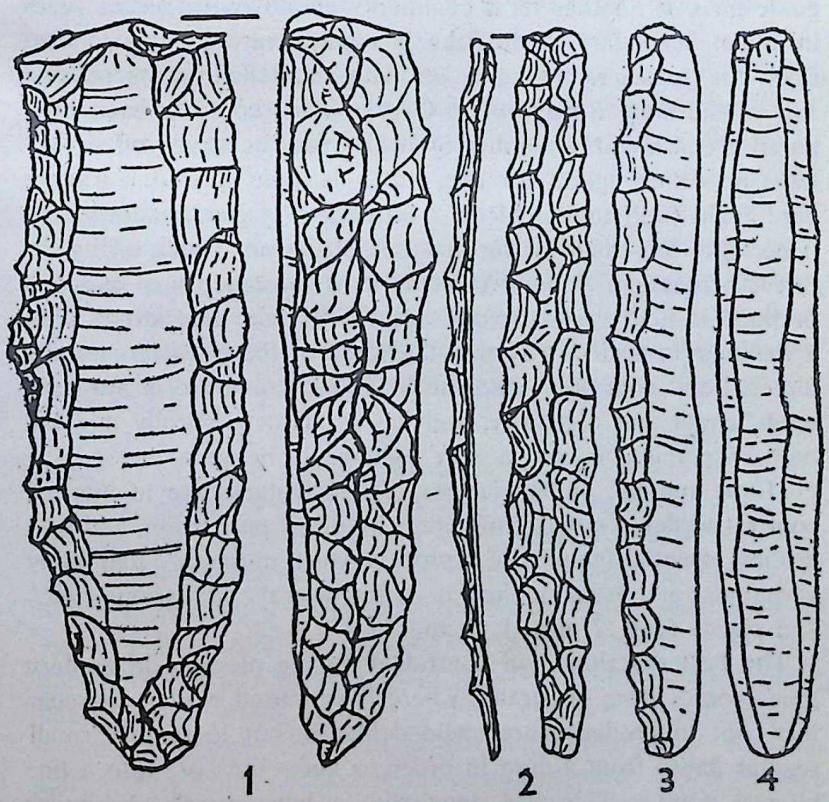

Fig. 1. The production of parallel-sided blades—classical example from Grand Pressigny: (1) blade core, (2) primary guide flake, (3) secondary guide flake, (4) blade. (After *Grahame Clark*)

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which first long flakes, and then long blades, can be struck off. The shape and direction of the flake are controlled largely by the median ridge or ridges formed initially on the surface of the core by the intersection of earlier flake scars. Therefore the core is made with a flat striking platform at one or both ends, and ridges run down its full length. The first long flake struck from such a core follows the direction of one of these ridges, and consequently it has a number of small flake scars upon its upper surface. The second and third flakes struck on either side of the first have small flake scars on one side of the median ridge and part of a single long flake scar on the other side. The term primary guide flake has been used to describe the initial long flake, and crested guide flake is another term commonly employed in recent years in India. Secondary guide flake is used correspondingly to describe the subsequent long flakes with small flake scars on one side of the median ridge only. Once a blade core has been prepared a considerable number of blades may be struck off it. We have no actual figures for this, but it is quite clear that a large core might yield anything from a dozen to fifty good blades before it becomes too small for further use. Blades are struck off by indirect percussion. A point of some hard substance such as wood or bone is held very carefully against the core and struck with a hammer in such a way that the force of the blow is carefully directed and controlled, and the blade thus removed is of maximum length and regularity, and has a characteristically minimal bulb of percussion, and a near right angle between the striking platform and the bulbar surface. These features are in marked contrast to flakes struck from cores by direct percussion, and they are the essential features of a process which must have had many variations, and been applied in different ways at various times and places (Fig. 2, nos. 1, 2 and 3).

The best description of controlled flaking of stone in modern times comes from Australia, where it was used earlier this century, not to produce parallel-sided blades, but to remove small regular flakes from a core in order to make the core into a fine bifacial point.[6] This was done with a bone punch. A similar

6. A. P. Elkin, "Pressure Flaking in Northern Kimberley, Australia", *Man*, no. 130 (1948).

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method has been used until the present day to obtain blades for the production of gun flints at Brandon in Norfolk; only there an iron spike is used in place of a bone point. After a number of blades have been struck from a core it may be necessary to trim the core before any more can be obtained. In order to do this the whole or part of the striking platform may be removed either because it has become too chipped and irregular, or in order to adjust the angle between the platform and the bulbar surface of the blade. In the same way the distal end of the core may be removed either to improve the shape of the core or to provide a new striking platform. In either case the result is frequently a flake triangular in section, with the proximal or distal ends of blade scars remaining on part of the upper surface. Many trimming flakes can be recognized as such, but do not fall in either of these categories. These by-products, like guide flakes and cores, are of interest because their presence indicates a knowledge of the technique of making parallel-sided blades. In many cases they have a further interest through being utilized as tools in their own right. The presence of a single blade or blade-like flake at a site cannot do this, as it may have been obtained from elsewhere or produced by some other process quite fortuitously. It is the total assemblage of stone tools from any cultural level that must be considered when deciding whether their makers possessed the skill of blade making.

Blades found at sites of both our major cultural periods vary greatly in size. The size of a blade depends upon the size of the core from which it is struck off, and this in turn depends upon the size and quality of the raw material available. When large pieces of cryptocrystalline silica, without cracks or flaws to interrupt the regular fracture of the stone, were available, large regular blades could be produced. A good example is the fine blade industry at Chandoli (Fig. 2). At Piklihal, on the other hand, the settlement lies in a granite region, where the nearest source of cryptocrystalline silica was the gravels of the Krishna, some twenty miles distant, which contained much rolled nodules of jasper and chalcedony carried down from the trap region to the north-west. These could only be made into small cores, and as a result the blades are also small. Small pebbles often could

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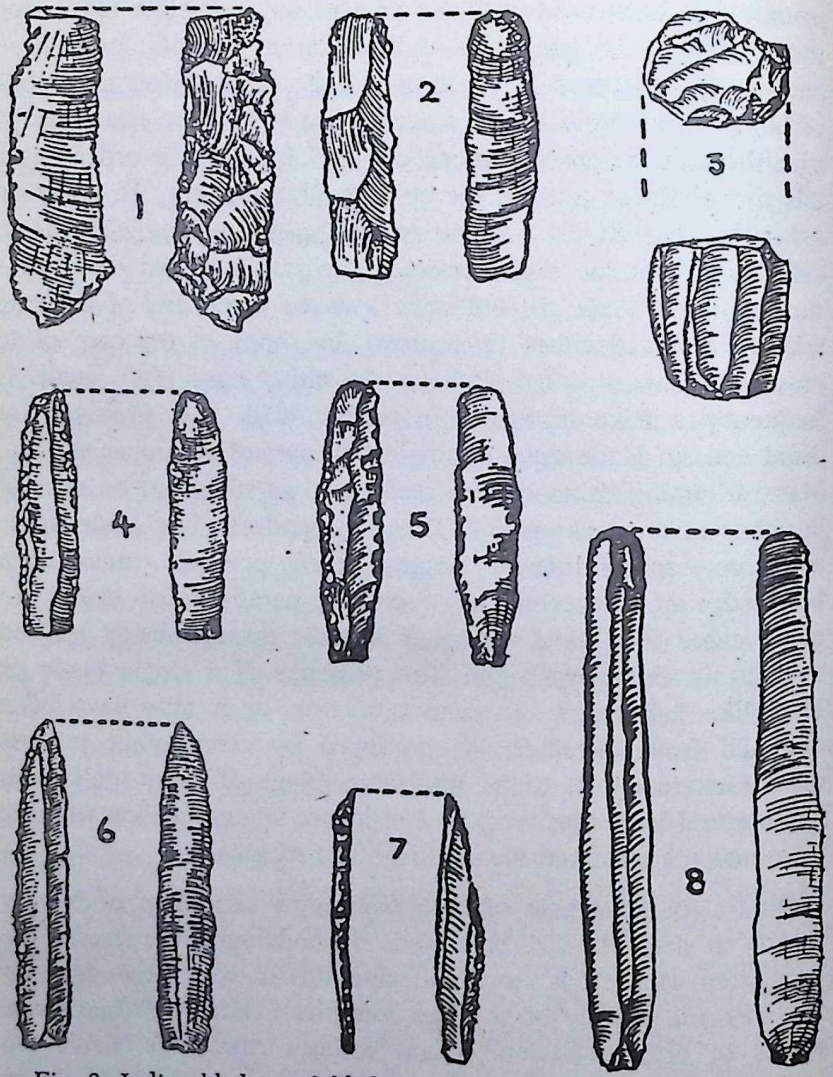

Fig. 2. Indian blades and blade cores: (1) primary guide flake, (2) secondary guide flake, (3) blade core reduced in size by the removal of blades, (4-7) backed blades, (8) unretouched blade. (After *Deo and Ansari*)

only be worked on one, two or three sides. Consequently the process was something of an approximation to that we have just described. The larger settlements could bring choice material from some distance, and there the production of blades often reached a high standard. The Late Stone Age hunters frequently made their tools near a source of raw material, as at Krishna

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Bridge and Barasimla. At the former the material was of poor quality, and at the latter of a fairly high quality. In Central India generally a great variety of jasper, chalcedonies and very fine grained quartzites are available, and the Late Stone Age industries attain a high standard in the production of blades and all tools. At the Late Stone Age sites, the full range of by-products, particularly primary and secondary guide flakes, have only rarely been recorded. This is no doubt partly due to the small assemblages from all but the largest Late Stone Age sites and partly to the highly selected collections from surface sites. But it must also be due to the absence of undisputed guide flakes at some of these sites. This means either that blade cores were prepared by other means, or that the technique was so far from the model we have described that those by-products are not recognizable. Both these explanations appear to be correct. As we have already seen, in many cases Late Stone Age craftsmen were often working with small pieces of raw material, from which they could not afford to waste anything except the cortex. Therefore natural features of the pebble had to serve as guide ridges, sometimes emphasized by the removal of a few small flakes. Blades and blade cores found at these sites clearly owe their origin to the same process of flaking by indirect percussion as those from Neolithic-Chalcolithic industries, and this necessitates a core of suitable form initially. Whether that form is due to natural, partly natural or wholly artificial causes is immaterial. Thick parallel-sided flakes with prominent bulbs of percussion are found in the Indian Middle Stone Age industries, and the crudest Late Stone Age blade cores could be regarded as the same thing in miniature form, but produced by indirect instead of direct blows. In this sense the Late Stone Age industry can be said to have evolved from that of the Middle Stone Age. Overall, however, it comes very close to that of the Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures, with which it shows every sign of a close and continuous relationship.

Lunates and geometric microliths form a single group, within which typological distinctions have little functional significance. It is for this reason that we have used the term composite points and barbs for this group of artefacts as a whole (Fig. 3). Evidence from many parts of the world in the form of complete

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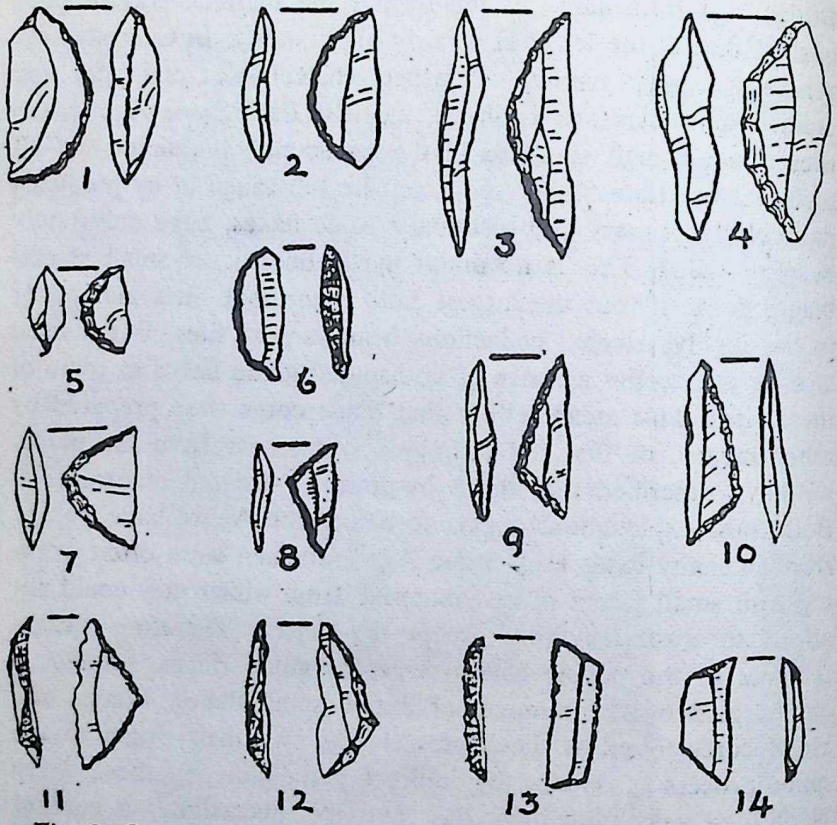

Fig. 3. Composite points and barbs: (1-6) lunates, (7-12) triangles, (13 & 14) trapezoids.

or partly complete hafted tools preserved in unusual circumstances, and that of an ethnographic nature recorded by travellers, chiefly during the last century, provides quite definite indications of how these tools were used. They were frequently hafted with the aid of mastics, such as resin or lac, as points or barbs in elaborate arrow-and-harpoon-heads, and possibly also as composite knife and sickle blades. To make the so-called geometric forms stone blades were broken into sections of suitable length, in Europe by the well-known notching method of which micro-burins are a characteristic by-product, and in Africa and India probably by simply snapping or twisting off sections of the blade. Sections of suitable size were then trimmed by careful retouching (the removal of minute flakes) round the broken ends

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and along one sharp edge to form lunates, triangles, trapezoids, petit tranchettes and other forms. The probable methods of hafting and using composite points and barbs in the Indian context and elsewhere have been discussed at some length elsewhere by one of the present writers.[7] Their association with hunting is almost universal. In certain instances, such as in the Late Stone Age industries of Ceylon, and the extreme south of India, they are made from small flakes, as opposed to blades, or simply from random chips of stone. This is something which varies from region to region and is related among other things to the use of different raw materials.

Throughout the Neolithic-Chalcolithic group of cultures blades produced by the processes we have described are a distinct feature, and they are generally present in considerable numbers. They are made in different materials according to the region: chert throughout the Harappan provinces; various forms of chalcedony in the trap regions of Maharashtra; jasper and other kinds of cryptocrystalline silica in north Karnataka, and so on. Sometimes the material was available in pieces large enough and sufficiently free from flaws to allow the manufacture of large cores from which long regular blades could be struck, such as are found at the major Harappan sites; elsewhere, as at some of the southern Neolithic sites, only small pebbles were available, and the resulting blades were perforce microlithic indeed. The blades often show signs of use, and many are broken, but they are rarely retouched. Sometimes they are broken into sections of regular length which is suggestive of composite hafting as knife and sickle blades, but no hafted blade-tools have so far been recovered from any excavated site in India. Composite points and barbs appear to be relatively scarce at most sites of this group. At the Late Stone Age sites, on the other hand, unretouched blades of all kinds appear to be less numerous, and composite points and barbs and reworked tools generally more numerous.

If this observation is correct it carries with it a number of implications regarding both the functions of different artefacts and the inter-relationships of the communities who made and used

7. B. Allchin, *The Stone Tipped Arrow* (London, 1966).

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them. In order to test our hypothesis and to determine the proportions of blades and geometric microliths at various sites, we went through the published accounts of a number of sites which we considered to be reasonably representative of either the Neolithic-Chalcolithic or the Late Stone Age group, and, to be adequately recorded, we selected ten of these. At each site we took the total number of blades, backed blades, and the total number of composite points and barbs, added these together and found out what percentage of the resulting total each group constituted. Backed blades are included because they frequently form a considerable proportion of the total number of blades in an assemblage, as at Adamgarh and Barasimla, and also because some of them may have been utilized as composite points and barbs. Therefore their presence cannot be ignored without distorting the picture. A backed blade may be defined as a blade which has been retouched along the full length of one edge. It may or may not be retouched at the distal end, and would therefore be suitable for use as points and barbs for missiles (Fig. 2, nos. 4-7). Some of the reports we used do not distinguish between these types of backed blades. In doing these calculations further difficulties arose because the system of classification and the terms used in each report were somewhat different. On a close examination of the reports many of these difficulties can be seen to be semantic rather than factual, and the question becomes whether certain small groups of tools such as "crescentic backed blades" should be included under our heading composite points and barbs. Often this can be settled by referring to the authors' descriptions and illustrations. But the fact remains that two archaeologists can seldom agree exactly where to draw lines of demarcation between types of stone tools even when they are using the same system and nomenclature. Therefore there must be certain differences from site to site and excavator to excavator regarding the classification of artefacts. One solution, which unfortunately is not possible at the present moment, would be for a single individual to classify all the collections personally.

The ten sites represented have been arranged in more or less descending order of percentage of blades, and in ascending order of percentage of composite points and barbs (Fig. 4). The total

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numbers of tools included in each category are indicated within parentheses. They are as follows :

1. Piklihal, a settlement of the southern Neolithic group in north Mysore excavated by the writers in collaboration with the former Hyderabad Archaeological Department in 1952. The percentages in Fig. 1 represent blades (1,284); backed blades (71); and geometrics (our composite points and barbs) (37).[8]

2. Navdatoli, a Chalcolithic settlement on the Narbada river in Madhya Pradesh, Central India, excavated by H. D. Sankalia, B. Subbarao and others in 1952-53. The percentages in Fig. 1 represent parallel-sided flakes (our blades) (2,197); blades (our backed blades) (147); lunates and trapezes (our composite points and barbs) (49).[9]

3. Maski, a large settlement of the southern Neolithic group in Mysore, excavated by B. K. Thapar of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1954. The percentages in Fig. 1 represent the following groups : (Type IIA) parallel-sided blades (our blades) (456); (Type IIC and IID) backed blades (72); (type IIE) crescentic backed blades, (type IIIA) lunates, (type IIIB) trapezes (our composite points and barbs) (24).[10]

4. Prakash, a large Chalcolithic settlement on the river Tapti in north-western Maharashtra, excavated by B. K. Thapar of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1955. The percentages in Fig. 1 represent the following groups: parallel-sided flakes and blades (our blades) (413); (types IIIA and IIIB) blunted backed blades (our backed blades) (58); (type VI) lunates, (type VII) trapezes, (type VD) crescentic points, (type IVA) curved backed penknife blades (our composite points and barbs) (45)[11]

5. Chandoli, a Chalcolithic site in the Poona district of Maharashtra, excavated by members of the Deccan College, Poona, in 1961, and producing a predominance of Jorwe ware. We get the

8. F. R. Allchin, *Piklihal Excavations* (Andhra Pradesh Government Archaeological Series, no. 1, Hyderabad, 1960), 105.

9. H. D. Sankalia, B. Subbarao and S. B. Deo, *The Excavations at Maheshwar and Navdatoli* (Poona, 1958), p. 53.

10. B. K. Thapar, "Maski 1954: a Chalcolithic Site of the Southern Deccan", *Ancient India*, no. 13 (1957), table on pp. 92-93.

11. B. K. Thapar, "Prakash 1955: a Chalcolithic Site in the Tapti Valley", *Ancient India*, no. 20 (1965), table 3 facing p. 100.

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following figures: type 4, complete and broken parallel-sided flakes (our blades) (572); type 6 (sub-types 2, 3 and 4) blunted backed blades, and type 9 (sub-types IA and IB) penknife blades, (our backed blades) (71); type 12 (sub-types 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7) points, type 13, triangles, type 14, trapezes, and type 15, lunates (our composite points and barbs) (164).[12]

6. Langhnaj, a Late Stone Age camp site on the plain of north Gujarat, situated on an old sand dune, excavated by H. D. Sankalia and members of the Deccan College, Poona, 1944 to 1963. Our figures are based upon 13,000 artefacts excavated in 1963: parallel-sided flakes (our blades) (59); straight blunted back-blades (our backed blades) (5); lunates, triangles and trapezes (our composite points and barbs) (17).[13]

7. Birbhanpur, a Late Stone Age camp site in West Bengal, excavated by B. B. Lal of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1954 and 1957. The terms used by the excavator coincide with those employed by the present writers: blades (106); lunates (42).[14]

8. Krishna Bridge, a Late Stone Age camp and/or factory site on the banks of the river Krishna, north Mysore, recorded by the writers in 1952 : blades (54); backed blades (2); lunates (our composite points and barbs) (24).[15]

9. Barasimla, a large factory site of the Late Stone Age, in the upper Narbada valley, Madhya Pradesh, recorded by the late D. H. Gordon during the 1930s. The site shows the following figures: blades (50); backed blades (40); lunates, triangles, single and asymmetrical points (our composite points and barbs) (47).[16]

12. S. B. Deo and Z. D. Ansari, *Chalcolithic Chandoli* (Deccan College Building Centenary and Silver Jubilee Series, no. 39, Poona, 1965), table on p. 34.

13. H. D. Sankalia, *Excavations at Langhnaj: 1944 to 1963*, pt. I, Archaeology (Deccan College Building Centenary and Silver Jubilee Series, Poona, 1965), 28-32.

14. B. B. Lal, "Birbhanpur, a Microlithic Site in the Damodar Valley, West Bengal", *Ancient India*, no. 14 (1958), table 2 on p. 33.

15. B. Allchin, *The Stone Tipped Arrow*, p. 215.

16. Ibid. pp. 84-85.

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10. Adamgarh, a rock shelter near Hoshangabad, in the middle Narbada valley, Madhya Pradesh, excavated by R. V. Joshi of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1961 and 1964. The figures are taken from the excavator's unpublished classified list of artefacts now in press: simple blades (our blades) (1,163); blades retouched and other backed blades (our backed blades) (867); tranchettes, trapezes, scalene and isosceles triangles, crescentic retouched blades and points on retouched blades (our composite points and barbs) (1,194).

Certain facts emerge directly from this table. The first is that

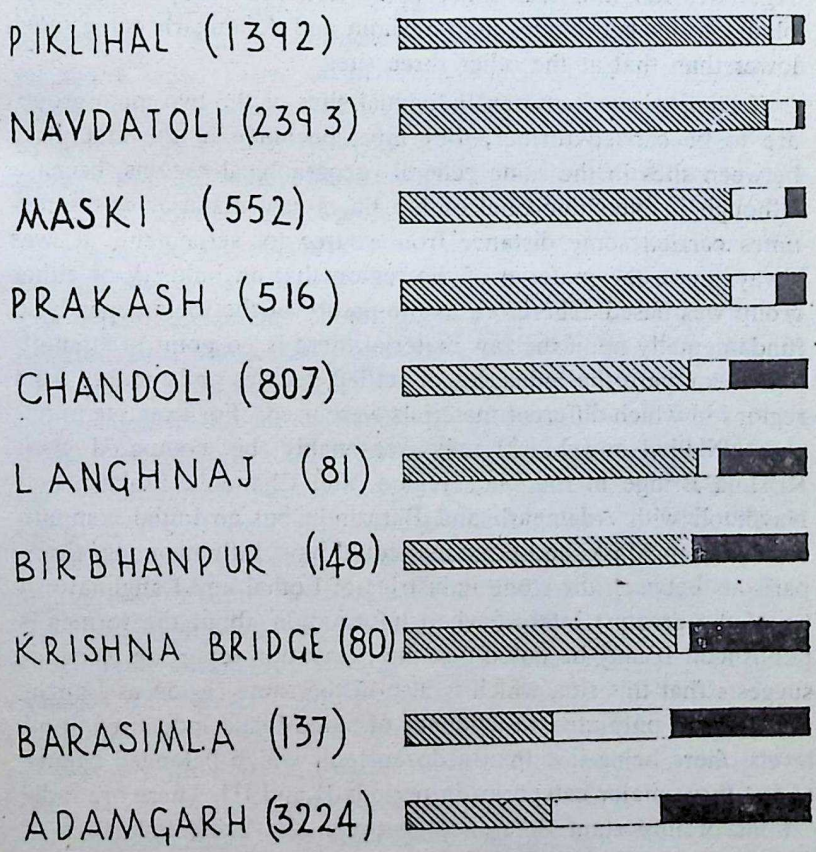

Fig. 4. Percentages of tools from ten sites (total of each sample in brackets): simple blades, cross-hatched; backed blades, white; and composite points and barbs, black.

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ordered thus, the sites divide themselves into two groups: (1) to (5) being Neolithic-Chalcolithic settlements, and (6) to (10) being the Late Stone Age sites of various kinds. There is no marked break between these two series, and indeed the Neolithic-Chalcolithic settlement with the lowest percentage of unworked blades, Chandoli, yields almost identical proportions of blades, backed blades and composite points and barbs to Langhnaj, the Late Stone Age site with the highest. However the difference between the extreme examples at either end of the chart is wide, and the general trend bears out our proposition. Secondly the Late Stone Age sites fall into two major categories, the ratio of unworked blades to backed blades at Barasimla and Adamgarh being much lower than that at the other three sites.

If comparisons between individual sites of the two main groups are to be carried further, they must be made in the first place between sites in the same general geographical regions, because although in Neolithic-Chalcolithic times raw material was sometimes carried some distance from source to settlement, it was always upon the material of the region that an industry of either group was based. Therefore as the nature of the tools depends so fundamentally upon the raw material there is no point in attempting to compare the industries of settled peoples and hunters from regions in which different materials were used. For example in our chart Piklihal and Maski may reasonably be compared with Krishna Bridge in the same region, and Chandoli, Prakash and Navdatoli with Adamgarh and Barasimla but an initial comparison between Maski and Langhnaj could have little meaning. Comparisons between the stone industries of Lothal and Langhnaj will be of the greatest interest when information about the former is published. It may be noted that the excavation report on Rangpur suggests that this site, which is also in the same region as Langhnaj, yielded only meagre evidence of stone blade industries in all levels, there being less than a dozen tools which belonged to any of our three major categories in periods II and III. There are indications of important differences between the blade industries of Central and Peninsular India on the one hand and those of Pakistan and Western India on the other. This must be confirmed not only by the fuller publication of reports on Harappan sites, such

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as Lothal but also by further research in these regions generally. The high proportion of backed blades seen only at Barasimla and Adamgarh cannot be accounted for at present. Nor indeed can the outstandingly high proportion of composite points and barbs at the Chalcolithic settlement of Chandoli. Chandoli lies between Navdatoli and Prakash on the one hand and Piklihal and Maski on the other, but shares the Deccan environment of the former. Whatever the reasons for this difference, it is certain that it is not simply chronological.

As far as the Late Stone Age sites are concerned the stone industries have so far been almost our only source of cultural information. The Neolithic-Chalcolithic sites have obviously yielded a wider range of material, which gives us information about various aspects of life. Techniques for obtaining ecological evidence from sites of both the groups are now beginning to be used in India. It should be possible to gain a much fuller picture of the environmental background of these cultures by using these techniques, and especially from the study of pollens, plant remains and animal bones. The extent to which the environment was exploited can then be estimated by the careful excavation at selected sites where the maximum cultural material can be expected to have been preserved. The presence of animal bones immediately raises the question of whether the animals were hunted or domesticated. At Neolithic-Chalcolithic settlements it can reasonably be assumed that certain species, such as cattle, sheep and goat were domesticated; and indeed the quantity of cattle bones, in particular, alone leaves little doubt on this point. In the case of other species, such as buffalo, pig, dog and fowl the numbers of bones are much smaller, and the question remains problematic. Bones of antelope, deer, etc. suggest that these animals were clearly hunted.

In the context of the Late Stone Age cultures the question of domestication needs careful consideration. So far at only two sites, Langhnaj and Adamgarh, have studies of the animal bones been made, and of these Adamgarh is as yet unpublished. Langhnaj certainly had no domesticated animals, but pig, a canid and a species of bovine are at least potentially domesticable. Several species of deer, antelope, Nilgai, and the rhinoceros were clearly

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hunted. At Adamgarh the situation, as described in preliminary reports, appears to be rather different. These reports indicate that there were bones of cattle (*Bos indicus*), sheep and goats, in addition to pig, dog and buffalo. Among the undoubted wild animals there were again several species of deer, monitor lizard and hare, and a rhinoceros hunt is represented in a nearby rock painting. The excavator estimates that wild and domestic species are approximately equally represented among the bones.[17]

The range of animal species represented at both groups of sites raises several interesting questions. The domestic species at Adamgarh indicate a combination of hunting and pastoralism, or do they represent the depredations of hunting peoples upon the herds of settled communities? If the latter is correct it should be possible to establish the identity of those communities whose settlements cannot have been very remote from the Late Stone Age rock shelters. Conversely the bones of wild animals at Neolithic-Chalcolithic settlements may simply indicate that the inhabitants supplemented their meat supply by hunting. In the modern Indian context settled agriculturalists are seldom hunters. Hunting is usually done either by small specialist groups, who form castes—in some cases known to represent former tribal groups—within the village community, or by independent tribal groups who have not been fully absorbed into the hierarchy. The latter bring meat and skins and other forest produce to village markets to trade with the villagers. Usually the tribal people obtain cereals, iron (in the form of knives, axes and arrow-heads), cloth, salt, tobacco and other goods in these transactions. The bones of game animals at prehistoric settlements may well represent evidence of such trade in past times.

The special development of the stone blade industry seen at the Neolithic-Chalcolithic sites in Central and Peninsular India, and its close correspondence to the industries of the Late Stone Age factories and rock shelters in these regions may well provide us with further evidence of contact between groups and communities at

17. For a discussion of the domestication of animals in the Indian subcontinent, see F. R. Allchin, "Early Domestic Animals in India and Pakistan", in P. J. Veko and G. W. Dimbleby (ed.), *The Domestication and Exploitation of Plants and Animals* (London, 1969), pp. 317-22.

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different cultural levels. We cannot be sure of the exact nature of this contact, but the use of the same basic material, always derived from the same local sources and possibly the same factory sites with the same basic techniques producing the same range of tools in only somewhat differing proportions, must mean that Neolithic-Chalcolithic and Late Stone Age peoples had some fairly intimate knowledge of one another's ways. Perhaps this means that the raw materials were gathered or quarried by the hunting peoples, who as the aborigines of the region knew its resources in terms of stone, worked them into tools and traded in them with the settled agriculturists. Or perhaps the trade was in the unworked raw material or even in partly prepared cores. Or on the other hand the sources of raw material may have been discovered by the villagers by other means and utilized directly by them. Be this as it may, several southern Neolithic sites indicate a comparatively crude and undeveloped, or even no, blade industry in the lowest Neolithic levels. This in turn suggests that in these early stages the Neolithic inhabitants did not have access to the best sources or raw material or to the finer skills of tool making.

The presence of composite points and barbs identical with those of the Late Stone Age, although in smaller proportions numerically, in Neolithic settlements may be taken to indicate the use of bows and arrows there. But we do not know whether the bowmen who used them belonged to the Neolithic communities or were of indigenous origin. Likewise the growing numbers of unretouched blades often with signs of heavy use must indicate the growing importance of new tools, some no doubt of a composite nature such as knives and sickles. The blade industries of many of these regions in course of time became more highly developed in the hands of the agriculturists than of the hunters. This shows that in larger communities it must have been possible both to obtain supplies of high quality raw material, sometimes from some distance, and to achieve a high standard of workmanship, perhaps as a result of craft specialization.

All these arguments lead us to the conclusion that certain elements of the Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures of central and peninsular India may reasonably be regarded as intrusive, but other

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no less important aspects of technology, and no doubt more general cultural elements were already indigenous to these regions. Therefore the Neolithic-Chalcolithic cultures themselves are likely to represent an early synthesis or partial synthesis of groups at different technological levels, and perhaps of occupational specialization on a group basis, as was noticed by D. D. Kosambi around his home in Poona and seen by him as so fundamental a part of the Indian life and culture.

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From Tribe to Untouchable : The Case of Niṣādas

VIVEKANAND JHA

Of the indigenous peoples met by the Aryans the first are the Niṣādas, mentioned as early as the *Rudrādhyāya* of the *Yajus Saṃhitās*. In the *śatarudriya* litany, accompanying the offerings appropriate to Rudra in his hundred aspects[1] or names,[2] reverence is shown, among others, to them.[3] Whereas most other autochthonous groups are noticed quite sparingly in the later Vedic texts and generally appear as victims at the symbolic human sacrifice in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*[4] and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*,[5] the Niṣādas are referred to a number of times and emerge with a full-fledged tribal personality within the Aryan social framework. This has induced several scholars[6] to presume

1. Macdonell and Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, ii (3rd Reprint, Delhi, 1967), 352.

2. James Hastings (ed), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, xi (New York, 1920), 91.

3. *niṣādebhyaśca vo namo namaḥ*, *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, iv, 5.4.2; *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā*, xvii, 13; *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā*, ii, 9.5; *Kāṇva Saṃhitā*, xvii, 4; *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, xvi, 27.

4. xxx, 6-21.

5. iii, 4.2-17.

6. A. Weber, *The History of Indian Literature* (tr. from 2nd German edn by Mann and Zachariae), 4th edn (London, 1904), p. 77; Macdonell and Keith, op. cit., i, 453; B. C. Law, *Tribes in Ancient India* (Poona, 1943), p. 98; A. D. Pusalker, "Aryan Settlements in India", *The Vedic Age* (ed R. C. Majumdar with others, Bombay, 1951), p. 265; D. D. Kosambi, *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline* (London, 1965), p. 86.

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that the Niṣādas signify at this stage aborigines in general rather than one particular tribe with separate group entity. They base their hypothesis on the *Nirukta* reference to Aupamanyava's explanation of *pañca janāḥ* found in a Ṛgvedic passage[7] as four varṇas and the Niṣādas.[8]

The ethnic element inhering the Niṣāda is pinpointed in later sources. The *Śānti Parva*[9] describes him as short-limbed with complexion having the colour of charred wood, blood-red eyes and black hair. To this portrayal is added high cheek-bones, low-tipped nose and copper-coloured hair by the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.[10] The black colour of the Niṣāda people is also emphasized in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*[11] and the *Vāyu Purāṇa*.[12] Although occurring in texts compiled not before the beginning of the Christian era, these references evidently contain genuine traditions regarding the physical characteristics of the Niṣādas. R. P. Chanda takes the Niṣādas to be the true representatives of the *anāryas* of the Ṛgvedic age[13] and the original speakers of the Munda family of languages.[14] N. K. Dutt[15] suggests that they belonged to a pre-Dravidian stock, presumably Munda-Monkhmer race, who had remained unabsorbed by the Dravidians. S. K. Chatterji differentiates the Niṣādas from the Dāsas and Dasyus[16] and thinks them to be Austric Proto-Australoids,[17] whose rural

7. x, 53.4.

8. iii, 8. Tribes were outside the localized caste system, thinks Kosambi, "Early Stages of the Caste System in Northern India", *JBBRAS*, New Series, xxii (1946), 35.

9. 59. 95-96.

10. iv, 14.44.

11. i, 13.

12. ii, ch. I, 120-21.

13. *The Indo-Aryan Races*, pt. I (Rajashahi, 1916), 3-4.

14. Ibid. p. 9.

15. *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, i (London, 1931), 106; cf. D. N. Majumdar, *Races and Cultures of India*, 4th edn (Bombay, 1961), p. 63; H. H. Risley, *The People of India* (1st Indian Reprint, Delhi, 1969), p. 17; J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India*, 4th edn (Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 290.

16. "Race Movements and Prehistoric Culture", *The Vedic Age*, pp. 157, 159.

17. Ibid. p. 156.

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culture is contrasted with that of the Dravidian speaking peoples.[18]

The process of acculturation of the Niṣādas seems to have started in the later Vedic period. Although the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*[19] speaks of them as marauders operating in forests they are no savage wandering brutes and appear as a people settled near Aryan habitation. The ritual of the *viśvajit* sacrifice requires sojourn with the Niṣādas for three nights[20] and partaking of their food, and a Niṣāda village is mentioned in this connection.[21] Since association and commensality are invariably more tabooed in the texts than the touch of a despised group, the Niṣādas are clearly not untouchables here, and in case they are considered synonymous with the entire mass of aborigines, we have no trace of untouchability in the period. The *Śrautasūtras* of Āpastamba,[22] Kātyāyana[23] and Vārāha[24] refer to a Niṣāda *sthapati* participating in a sacrifice and offering a *caru* (an oblation boiled with butter and milk or a pot of oblation) of *gavedhuka* corn (a wild variety) in ordinary fire to propitiate Rudra; the consecration of fire with Vedic *mantras* is implicitly denied to him. The *Mānava Śrautasūtra*,[25] however, prescribes a Śrauta sacrifice for a Niṣāda chief. The *Satyāṣāḍha Śrautasūtra*[26] mentions only a Niṣāda in connection with the performance of *agnihotra* and *darśapūrṇamāsa*, but the commentator interprets this as implying the Niṣāda chieftain. The *Pūrvamīmāṃsā Sūtra*[27] of Jaimini discusses the question whether the Niṣāda *sthapati* signifies a *traivar-*

18 Ibid. p. 157.

19. *yathā ha vā idaṃ niṣādā vā selagā vā pāpakṛto vā vittavantaṃ puruṣaṃ gṛhītvā vartamanvasya vittamādāya dravanti*, xxxvii, 7.

20. *niṣāde tisro ratrīrvasataḥ*, *Āpastamba Śrautasūtra*, xvii, 26.18; cf. *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* xvi, 6; *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, xxv, 15.

21. *Lāṭyāyana Śrautasūtra*, viii, 2.8.

22. ix, 14.12.

23. i, 1.12.

24. i, 1.1.5.

25. v, 1.9.29, cited by Ram Gopal, *India of Vedic Kalpasūtras* (Delhi, 1959), p. 116.

26. iii, 1.

27. iv, 1.51. The work is posterior to Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and anterior to Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*, according to P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, ii, pt. I (Poona, 1941), xi.

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ṇika (a member of one of the three higher varṇas) leader from outside the tribe or the tribal chief and subscribes to the latter view. Rudra Paśupati is a pre-Aryan deity, and R. S. Sharma[28] contends that as a step in their brāhmaṇization the Niṣādas as a tribe were allowed to carry on their sacrificial ritual in the Vedic way, which privilege later came to be confined only to their chief. But the Vedic ritual status granted to the Niṣādas seems to have been generally of a limited nature. The references to the Niṣāda *sthapati* also indicate some sort of organization among them, though Keith's speculation[29] about their probable subjection to a remote royal authority lacks corroborative evidence. Chanda[30] thinks that the Niṣādas were too numerous to be annihilated and too powerful to be enslaved or expelled *en masse*; the Aryans were, therefore, compelled to meet them half way. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[31] mentions them along with the Asuras, the Gandharvas, the *selagas* (robbers[32] or thieves[33]), the snake-charmers, the bird-catchers, etc., who received instructions from the priests in *Itihāsa*, the *Atharvaveda*, *sarpavidyā* (art of snake-charming) and *devajanavidyā* (demonology). The pains taken to induct the Niṣādas into the Aryan fold are unmistakable.

The initial response from the Niṣādas to Aryanization may not have been favourable. The consequent rancour of the brāhmaṇical order is reflected in the *Nirukta*[34] derivation of the Niṣāda as a being in whom sin or evil sits down and the *Śānti Parva*[35] account of his origin from the pierced thigh of the tyrant king Veṇa. The Aupamanyava explanation of the *pañca janāḥ* also reflects very real differences between the Niṣādas and the regular fourth varṇa of the śūdras in the time of Yāska, irrespec-

28. *Śūdras in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1958), p. 72.
29. E. J. Rapson (ed), *The Cambridge History of India*, i (1st Indian Reprint, Delhi, 1955), 117.
30. Op. cit., p. 5.
31. xiii, 4. 7-13; cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, vii, 1.1.
32. *Vedic Index*, ii, 473.
33. Kane, op. cit., p. 46.
34. *niṣādaḥ ... niṣaṇṇamasmin pāpakamiti nairuktāḥ*, iii, 8. Yāska is anterior to Pāṇini.
35. 59. 94-97.

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tive of the four-varṇa theory. N. K. Dutt[36] maintains that the Niṣādas were slowly assimilated into the brāhmaṇical society as a fifth caste. Presumably they shared this position with the Caṇḍālas, the Paulkasas, etc., who first appear as independent entities in the chronologically late portions of the *Yajurveda*, and have their own long and continuous history—initially hazy, later full-blown. Such expressions as *naiṣādam*,[37] explained as *niṣādaputram*, son of a Niṣāda, and *paulkasa*,[38] taken to mean the son of a Pulkasa, perhaps mark the point of separation and branching off from the single parent body designated as the Niṣāda. Logically, this would imply the ethnic unity and fusion of the aborigines with whom the Aryans came into contact in the north. But some scholars[39] point out that the aborigines belonged to innumerable stems which were very different from one another ethnically and culturally. They suggest that possibly the Niṣādas are singled out of several other aboriginal tribes for repeated mention because of their substantial numerical strength and relatively greater amenability to Aryan influence than the Caṇḍālas, the Paulkasas, etc.[40]

We come across a Niṣāda *gotra* in the *gaṇapāṭha* of Pāṇini.[41] This does not recur in any of the standard *gotra* lists. R. S. Sharma[42] expresses doubt about its being a brāhmaṇical *gotra*. According to Kosambi,[43] the Niṣāda *gotra* would not be possible unless some brāhmaṇas had been adopted from the aboriginal

36. Op. cit., p. 107. Theoretically, there is no fifth varṇa, and the expression "fifth caste", though suggestive, is not appropriate. The Niṣādas signify the fifth order of Vedic society, according to Chanda, op. cit., p. 4.

37. *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, xxx, 8.

38. Ibid. xxx, 17; *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, iii, 4.14.1.

39. R. Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time* (tr. from German by S. K. Maitra, Calcutta University, 1920), p. 315; cf. F. E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1922), p. 290.

40. G. S. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India*, 2nd edn (Bombay, 1957), p. 53.

41. iv, 1.100. *Gotra*, through indication of lineage affiliation, does carry status and prestige with it, N. K. Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha* (Bombay, 1966), p. 124.

42. *Śūdras*, p. 130 fn.

43. "The Basis of Ancient Indian History" (I), *JAOS*, lxxv, no. 1 (January-March 1955), 44.

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priests or had served the aborigines as priests. The role of a brāhmaṇa, whether immigrant or risen from the tribal priests, as an instrument of change in status, is not in doubt.[44] Perhaps we have here an early example of the familiar historical phenomenon of all members of an assimilated tribal group not always being given the same place in the brāhmaṇical order, and the same tribe breaking up into several varṇas and castes.[45] It may also be that the overwhelming majority of the Niṣādas remained backward and uninducted and this prompted the lawgivers to place the caste at the lowest *anuloma* level, though a fall in the status of the whole tribe from what it enjoyed in later Vedic society would not be unusual, and is in fact a common feature of quite a few other mixed castes.[46]

The *Dharmasūtras* of Baudhāyana, Gautama and Vasiṣṭha, the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya, the *Smṛtis* of Manu, Yājñavalkya, Nārada, Uśanas and Vaikhānasa, and the *Anuśāsana Parva* furnish unassailable evidence of the attempt to annex, among others, the Niṣādas into the varṇa order by ascribing them a wholly arbitrary genesis. No less than three different theories are put forward, the earliest and the most widely subscribed one holding the Niṣāda to be a cross between a brāhmaṇa and his śūdra wife.[47] In spite of a similar theoretical derivation, the Pāraśava retains a separate identity. Gautama,[48] as interpreted by Haradatta,[49] assigns the birth of the Niṣāda to a brāhmaṇa

44. Ibid. p. 42. According to W. Crooke (*Tribes and Castes of the North-West Provinces and Oudh*, Calcutta, 1896), a compliant priest is always ready to discover an appropriate *gotra* for a deserving aspirant, cited by E.A.H. Blunt, *The Caste System of Northern India* (Oxford University Press, 1931), p. 44.

45. V. N. Jha, "Varṇasaṁkara in the Dharmasūtras: Theory and Practice", *JESHO*, xiii, pt. III (1970), 284.

46. Ibid.

47. *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, i, 9.17.3; ii, 2.3.29; *Arthaśāstra*, iii, 7.21; *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, xviii, 8; *Manusmṛti* x, 8; *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, i, 91; *Anuśāsana Parva*, 48.5.

48. iv, 14.

49. *brāhmaṇasyaikāntarā vaiśyā tasyāṃ tasmānniṣādaḥ*. This is also the view of Maskarin, another commentator of Gautama, S. C. Banerji, *Dharmasūtras: A Study in their Origin and Development* (Calcutta, 1962), p. 128.

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father and a vaiśya mother. The *Anuśāsana Parva*[50] and the *Nāradasmṛti*[51] attribute to the Niṣāda a kṣatriya and śūdrā parentage. Possibly they represent different traditions current in different schools. Significantly, although both Baudhāyana[52] and Kauṭilya[53] provide one-tenth share to a brāhmaṇa's son from a śūdra wife, the former refers to ancient authorities,[54] apparently without dissent, according to whom the similarly derived Niṣāda son, though a member of the family, is to be disinherited, and the latter allows only maintenance to a Niṣāda son of even rich parents.[55] This underlines the unreality of the *varṇasaṃkara* theory. In any case, with no exercise of reason the important and numerous tribe of the Niṣādas, with their recorded history dating from later Vedic times, can be represented and maintained as, by and large, the mixed *anuloma* progeny of the first and fourth orders of Aryan society. The theoretical origin of the Niṣādas, therefore, is a pure legal fiction, invented to bring them into relation with the varṇa system, which alone was valid in law. This gradually thrust the Niṣādas down in the social scale and relegated them in course of time to the position of untouchables. The Niṣādas are surely quite distinct from the Niṣadhas, with whom they are often confounded but who in all probability belonged to the Aryan fold.[56]

The Niṣādas seem to have continued with their traditional occupation of fishing and hunting even after their absorption in brāhmaṇical society. Without specifying the vocation of the *antarālas* (mixed castes), Kauṭilya[57] asks them to pursue hereditary callings. Fishing is their profession according to Manu[58] and the *Anuśāsana Parva*.[59] Nandapaṇḍita explains *niṣāda* occurring in the *Viṣṇusmṛti*[60] as one who subsists on fishing, and Somedeva's

50. 48.12.
51. xii, 108.
52. ii, 2.3.10.
53. iii, 6.17.
54. ii, 2.3.32-33.
55. iii, 6.15.
56. Pusalker, "Aryan Settlements in India", *The Vedic Age*, p. 262.
57. iii, 7.36.
58. x, 48.
59. 48.12.
60. li, 14.

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Kathāsaritsāgara[61] attests it. The *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, which refers to the Niṣāda as a caste (*niṣādajātyaḥ*),[62] represents the Niṣāda king Guha as helping Rāma cross the Ganga.[63] The *Raghuvaṃśa*[64] portrays the Niṣāda as a boatman. The *Harivaṃśa*[65] shows the Niṣādas collecting precious gems and jewels from the river beds. The *Bāla Kāṇḍa*[66] mentions hunting (*prāṇātipātanirato*) as the occupation of the Niṣādas. The Niṣādas appear as cruel beings sheltering in hills and forests (*krūrāḥ śailavanāśrayāḥ*) in the *Śānti Parva*.[67] *Hiraṇyadhanus* (wielder of golden bow, hunter) Ekalavya is designated *hiraṇyadhanuṣaḥ sutaḥ*, son of an archer, in the *Ādi Parva*,[68] which shows that bowmanship was the hereditary trait of the Niṣādas. Utpala, the eighth-century commentator on the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, interprets *niṣāda*, figuring in this work,[69] as a hunter. Killing wild beasts is the profession of the Niṣādas, according to Vaikhānasa[70] and Uśanas.[71] Perhaps Vijñāneśvara[72] considers the *anuloma* derivation of the Niṣāda as inconsistent with his occupation and so distinguishes this Niṣāda from a *pratiloma* Niṣāda, who, according to him, lives by catching fish. The training of the elephant is the only other vocation meant for the Niṣāda. This is brought out by Maskarin's comment on a passage of Gautama[73]

61. Cited by S. B. Chaudhuri, *Ethnic Settlements in Ancient India*, pt. I (Calcutta, 1955), 44. Keith assigns the work to the eleventh century, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 281.
62. Canto I, 3.
63. Canto I, 33.
64. *gaṅgāṃ niṣādahṛtanauviśeṣatatāra*, xiv, 52.
65. Cited by Chaudhuri, op. cit., p. 44; cf. B. A. Saletore, *The Wild Tribes in Indian History* (Lahore, 1935), p. 101. The *Harivaṃśa* forms a supplement to the *Mahābhārata* and is attributed to *c.* A.D. 400, S. Jaiswal, *Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism* (Delhi, 1967), p. 16.
66. Canto lix, 21.
67. 59.97; cf. *Padma Purāṇa*, ii, 27.42-43.
68. 123.9.
69. v, 76.
70. x, 13.
71. Verse 37.
72. *. . . niṣādo nāma kaścinmatsyaghātajīvī pratilomajaḥ sa mābhūtidi*, *Mitākṣarā* on *Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, i, 91.
73. iv, 26.

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and the use of *niṣādin* in the sense of an elephant-keeper in the *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa[74] and the *Śiśupālavadha* of Māgha.[75]

The Nesāda (Pali equivalent of Niṣāda) is a hunter *par excellence* in the Buddhist texts,[76] engaging himself in animal-killing, fowling and fishing. Fick[77] groups the Nesāda, like the Caṇḍāla and the Pukkusa, among the "ethnical castes" held together by a common race. Indeed, the profession followed by the members of an entire tribe separated from the rest of the population helped its development into a caste under the pressure of a superior social organization with a superior economy,[78] and this meant its enrolment in the hierarchical scheme of general society.

Since hunting and fishing represent the earliest stage and lowest level of material existence, the economic lot of the Niṣādas, depending on these, was admittedly deplorable. Compared to pastoral life and, much more so, to agriculture, the subsistence value of hunting is acknowledged to be limited.[79] But a recent study[80] dubs even tribal agriculture, practised on the poorest of the rocky soils with little depth, no irrigation, very scanty rainfall, peculiar pattern of crops and low yields, as a deficit agriculture, the "lowest type of sub-subsistence farming". With great material prosperity in society owing to the knowledge and use

74. V. S. Agrawala, *The Deeds of Harṣa* (Varanasi, 1969), p. 161.

75. *niśitāṃkuśadūrabhinnanāryāṇanāryadaśrjaṃ calitaṃ niṣādī*, v, 41. Māgha flourished in the latter half of the seventh century A.D., Dasgupta and De, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, i (Calcutta University, 1947), 188.

76. *Jātakas*, ii, 132, 200; iii, 97; iv, 364, 413; v, 110, 337; vi, 71f, 170. Rhys Davids and Stede translate the word as one who lies in wait or a hunter, *Pali-English Dictionary* (London, 1921), p. 378.

77. Op. cit., p. 324.

78. Cf. N. K. Bose, *Culture and Society in India* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 205, 214.

79. Kosambi, *The Culture*, p. 51; cf. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956), p. 106; "Early Stages of the Caste System in Northern India", *JBBRAS*, New Series, xxii (1946), 37.

80. R. P. Saxena, *Tribal Economy in Central India* (Calcutta, 1964), p. xi.

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of metals, including iron,[81] and extensive pursuit of agriculture and trade,[82] the persistence of the Niṣādas in their traditional mode of livelihood only accentuated their economic lag vis-à-vis the common people. Such phrases as *na lābhī annassa pānassa vatthassa yānassa* and *dalidde apannapānabhojane* in early Buddhist texts,[83] applied collectively to the despised castes, cannot be brushed aside as senseless rhetoric so far as the Niṣādas are concerned. Added to this was the widespread taboo associated with killing living beings, and the sources concur in placing the Niṣādas at the lowest social level.[84] They are referred to as living in their own villages on the outskirts of towns and villages inhabited by the general population.[85]

Despite equivocation by some brāhmaṇa lawgivers the low ritual status of the Niṣādas cannot be wished away. Kauṭilya[86] mentions only the Caṇḍālas as untouchables and labels all the other mixed castes, including the Niṣādas, as śūdras. But the distinction he maintains between a Niṣāda son and a śūdra son of a brāhmaṇa in respect of inheritance exposes his actual attitude. Vasiṣṭha,[87] Manu[88] and Viṣṇu[89] forbid the taking of food from

81. According to Bridget and Raymond Allchin, iron working probably entered India around 1000 B.C. and . . . it diffused rapidly to both north and south, *The Birth of Indian Civilization* (Penguin Series, 1968), p. 327. To Kosambi, the date 800-700 B.C. seems a reasonable beginning of the iron age in India, meaning thereby specifically the Gangetic basin where iron was most needed and most likely to have been worked, "The Beginning of the Iron Age in India", *JESHO*, vi, pt. III (1963), 318.

82. R. S. Sharma, "Material Background of the Origin of Buddhism", *Das Kapital Centenary Volume* (Delhi, 1968), pp. 59, 65; cf. Wagle, op. cit., pp. 5, 156.

83. *Majjhima Nikāya*, iii, 169-70; *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, ii, 85; iii, 385.

84. *Majjhima Nikāya*, ii, 93, 96, 129; *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, ii, 85; *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, i, 93; *Vinaya Piṭaka*, iv, 6-10; *Suttavibhaṅga Pācittiya*, ii, 2.1; *Puggalapaññatti*, iv, 19; *Ācārāṅga Niryukti*, 21-27.

85. *Jātakas*, ii, 36; iv, 413, 422; v, 337; *Therīgāthā Commentary*, pp. 291 ff. The Buddhist *Caryāpadas* (ninth-tenth centuries) refer to the Niṣādas as living with their womenfolk on mounds outside villages, cited by R. S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India* (Delhi, 1969), p. 17.

86. iii, 7.37.

87. xiv, 2.

88. iv, 215.

89. li, 14.

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a Niṣāda, a notable change from later Vedic days. This in itself does not establish the untouchability of the Niṣāda, as the injunction could as well apply to the śūdras. The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra,*[90] an earlier work, prescribes the cessation of Vedic study on the day a *bāhya* (one who has his residence outside Aryan villages) enters a village. The late medieval commentator Haradatta[91] applies the term to the Niṣādas. Hsüan Tsang[92] lists the fishermen among persons who were obliged to live outside the city and sneaked along on the left when going about in the hamlets. Alberuni[93] also classes the fishermen and hunters of wild animals and birds among *antyajas* below the śūdras, who lived near but outside the villages and towns of the four orders. V. M. Apte,[94] therefore, rightly includes the Niṣādas under the category of Pāṇini's *niravasita* (excluded) śūdras, who were, according to A. L. Basham,[95] quite outside the pale of Hindu society and were virtually indistinguishable from the great body of people later known as untouchables. The treatment of the Niṣādas as inferior śūdras does not make a difference, for, as R. S. Sharma[96] maintains, the inferior śūdras were demarcated from the ordinary śūdras by their habitations, backward culture and primitive religious beliefs. The Niṣādas clearly belonged to those social segments, which were kept at a distance, perhaps segregated and considered much lower in status than the general śūdra population.

The *Amarakośa*[97] equation of the Niṣāda with the Caṇḍāla should, however, not be taken at its face value; the Caṇḍāla, though occasionally also a hunter like the Niṣāda, is more than

90. i, 3.9.18.

91. Bühler, *SBE*, ii, pt. I, 2nd edn (Oxford University Press, 1897), 35, fn. 18.

92. T. Watters (tr.), *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, i (1st Indian Reprint, Delhi, 1961), 147.

93. E. C. Sachau (ed and tr.), *Alberuni's India*, i (London, 1910), 101. B. R. Ambedkar attests the continuity of the phenomenon (*The Untouchables*, Delhi, 1948, p. 22).

94. *Social and Religious Life in the Grihyasūtras*, 2nd edn (Bombay, 1954), p. 5.

95. *The Wonder that was India* (London, 1954; 1961 Reprint), p. 143.

96. *Śūdras*, p. 208.

97. ii, 10.20.

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that. The disabilities of the Niṣādas in the texts are both less elaborate and less severe. Parāśara[98] considers pollution from a woman of the hunter or fowler caste only half that from a Caṇḍāla woman. Alberuni[99] also pinpoints the inferiority of the Caṇḍāla. Significantly, not only does Parāśara employ the expression *lubdhakī*,[100] but also other medieval lawgivers use different synonyms of the hunter in their restrictive regulations. Saṃvarta,[101] for example, requires expiation of a twice-born for physical contact with a *kaivarta* (fisherman), a *mṛgayu* (deer-hunter), a *vyādha* (hunter), and a *śākunika* (bird-catcher), and Hārīta[102] has a similar provision with respect to a *vyādha* (hunter), a *jālopajīvī* (fisherman), etc. The inclusion of *śākunika* (fowler), *māgavika* (hunter) and *macchaghātaka* (fisherman) in the category of *kanhābhi* (black) *jāti* by the Buddha[103] and the treatment of *vāha* (hunter), *macchandha* (fisherman) and *vāguriya* (fowler) as despised and isolated groups of people in the Jain texts[104] afford close parallels.

The very nature of the occupation of the Niṣādas may have constrained them to lead a co-operative existence. Kauṭilya[105] recommends the observance of precedence among the mixed castes. The importance of age in a primitive society is not questioned. But Wagle[106] rightly states that at the lowest level of social hierarchy sophisticated rules which differentiate social status in interpersonal behaviour seldom apply. Kauṭilya[107] lays down equal share in inheritance for the sons of the mixed caste parents. With no great difference in the material condition of individual members, this does not seem unlikely. The data regarding the marriage practices of the Niṣādas do not lend themselves to precise inferences. Several centuries before the Christian

98. vi, 40. 44-45.
99. Sachau, op. cit., p. 101.
100. vi, 44.
101. Quoted by Aparārka, p. 1196.
102. Ibid. p. 279.
103. *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, iii, 383-84.
104. *Vyavahāra Bhāṣya*, 3.94; *Niśītha Cūrṇi*, 4, p. 345 and 11, p. 747.
105. *pūrvāparagāmitvam*, iii, 7.36.
106. Op. cit., p. 142.
107. *sarveṣāmantarālānāṃ samo vibhāgaḥ*, iii, 7.39.

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era the Buddha[108] admits the relevance of *jāti* (birth or caste) to marriage (*āvāha-vivāha*). Kauṭilya[109] also lays down that among the mixed castes marriage is to take place in their own caste of origin. The *Sāma Jātaka* refers to two Niṣāda village chiefs solemnizing marriage of their son and daughter[110] in pursuance of a compact made in their youth.[111] The *Baudhāyana Dharmāsūtra*,[112] Manu[113] and the *Anuśāsana Parva*,[114] on the other hand, mention several mongrel progeny of the Niṣādas. Although the details of derivation are purely fictitious and wholly unreliable, the Niṣādas may have intermarried with other hunter groups and sometimes even with despised sections among the artisans.[115] The *Ādi Parva*[116] reference to the Niṣādī wife of a brāhmaṇa suggests that in the process of the brāhmaṇization of the Niṣādas some brāhmaṇas took wives from among them. Kauṭilya[117] does not find fault with the wives of fishermen and hunters travelling with their husbands. Viṣṇu,[118] Yājñavalkya,[119] Nārada[120] and Bṛhaspati[121] specify that the liability for debts contracted by the wives of hunters and the like devolves upon their husbands whose livelihood or income depends on their wives. All this shows that the Niṣāda women may have enjoyed greater physical freedom and economic independence than their counterparts in upper caste families. The *Ādi Parva* depiction of a Niṣādī as seeking grain (*annārthinī*)[122] and enjoying liquor (*sā pītvā madirāṃ mattā*)[123] is meaningful.

108. *Dīgha Nikāya*, i, 99.
109. iii, 7.36.
110. *tesaṃ āvāhavivāhaṃ karimsu*, *Jāt* vi, 72.
111. *tesaṃ āvāhavivāhaṃ hotu*, Ibid. p. 71.
112. i, 8.11-12; i, 9.13-14.
113. x, 18. 34. 36-37, 39.
114. 48. 23.
115. Cf. Weber, op. cit., pp. 110-11; Sachau, op. cit., p. 101.
116. .... *niṣādī mama bhāryeyam*, 25. 3-5.
117. iii, 4.22. Kangle, however, translates *pathyanusaraṇa* as a wife's going away with another man (*Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, pt. I, Bombay University, 1960, Glossary, 46).
118. vi. 37.
119. ii, 48.
120. i, 19.
121. xii, 53.
122. 136. 7.
123. 136. 8.

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The Niṣādas frequently appear as fairly organized groups in the texts. Some Niṣāda villages are said to comprise 500[124] or 1,000[125] fishermen's or 500 hunters'[126] families under their respective chiefs. Although occasional concentration of the Niṣādas in a riparian tract or a forest fringe abounding in game is likely, the numbers used are conventional[127] and deceptive, and tend to create a false impression of their economic strength and social importance. References to such villages only indicate the tendency of occupational groups to segregate and organize.[128] Guilds of fishermen and sailors are noticed in the Buddhist texts.[129] The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*,[30] speaks of a Niṣāda *saṃgha*. A. M. Shastri[131] takes the term literally in the sense of a corporation, and disputes the interpretation of Utpala who takes it as *samūha* or multitude. Hsüan Tsang[132] and Alberuni[133] certify the existence of guilds of fishermen and hunters. The *Mahābhārata*[134] contains numerous references to the Niṣādas coming into clash with both the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. Presumably, like the Bhillas in later times,[135] they engaged in irregular warfare. In fact, both Mahīdhara[136] and Sāyaṇa[137] identify the Niṣāda as a Bhilla, and

124. Therīgāthā, p. 243ff.
125. *Jātaka*, i, 234.
126. Ibid. vi, 71 f.
127. D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1960), p. 13. Rev. Fr. Stephen Fuch's statement that a small tribe is unlikely to produce the genius that materially advances the culture of the group ("The Contribution of Anthropology to Indian History", *Indica*, ed R. K. Mookerji and others, Bombay, 1953, p. 157) perhaps aptly applies to the Niṣādas.
128. R. N. Mehta, *Pre-Buddhist India* (Bombay, 1939), pp. 183-84; B. C. Law, "Occupations in Buddha's Time", *Indological Studies*, pt. II (Calcutta, 1952), 63, 70-71.
129. R. C. Majumdar, *Corporate Life in Ancient India*, 3rd edn (Calcutta, 1939), p. 16 and fn.
130. v, 76.
131. *India as Seen in the Bṛhatsaṃhitā of Varāhamihira* (Delhi, 1969), pp. 91, 466.
132. Watters, op. cit., p. 170.
133. Sachau, op. cit., p. 101.
134. *Sabhā Parva*, 28.5, 44; 27.10; *Bhīṣma Parva*, 50.5, 14; 112.108; *Karṇa Parva*, 5.19; *Āśvamedhika Parva*, 84.7-10, etc.
135. Kosambi, *The Culture*, p. 43.
136. Commentary on *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, xvi, 27.
137. Commentary on *Kāṇva Saṃhitā*, xvii, 4.

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use the identical expression, *niṣādā giricarā māṃsāśino bhillāḥ*.... In line with the Śrautasūtras, the *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*[138] applies the epithet *sthapati* to the Niṣāda king Guha (*sthapatiśceti viśrutaḥ*). The *Ādi Parva*[139] also mentions the *adhipati* of the Niṣādas. Ekalavya, son of the *niṣādarāja*, is himself succeeded by his son, who goes down fighting to Arjuna in the *Āśvamedhika Parva*.[140] This shows the hereditary nature of the office and the choice of chief from within the tribe itself. Expressions denoting the Niṣādas' political sway over particular areas are also met with; the territory under the jurisdiction of Ekalavya's son is designated *viṣaya*.[141] The spectacle of the same tribe organizing itself to set up monarchies or kingdoms and at the same time holding a low place in social stratification appears paradoxical. In Kosambi's opinion,[142] militarized tribes headed towards oligarchy or monarchy; those without weapons could survive only as guilds or castes. Even residence in a tribal kingdom outside the *jāti* system of social organization did not prevent the degradation of the Niṣāda in the Hindu social scheme because of the absence of prejudice against occupations and food which were taboo to the caste Hindus.[143]

It is difficult to define the habitat of the Niṣādas in ancient times. They do not appear in the *Ṛgveda*, the greater part of which refers to events that took place about 1500-1200 B.C. in Panjab.[144] The *Saṃhitās* of the *Yajurveda*, which first refer to them, are roughly dated in 1000-800 B.C.[145] and were compiled, like most later Vedic texts, in western Uttar Pradesh in

138. Canto 1, 33.
139. 61. 48.
140. 84. 7-10.
141. Ibid. 84-87.
142. "The Basis of Ancient Indian History" (I), *JAOS*, lxxv, no. 1 (January-March 1955), 38.
143. Cf. Hutton, op. cit., p. 197.
144. Kosambi, *An Introduction*, p. xvii; *The Culture*, p. 73.
145. *The Culture*, p. 85. The *Saṃhitās* of the *Black Yajurveda* are older than the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*, though not very distant from one another, Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, i (tr. from German by Mrs Ketkar, Calcutta University, 1927), 171. Renou points to strata of different ages, *Vedic India* (tr. from French by Philip Spratt, Calcutta, 1957), p. 15.

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the land of Kuru and Pañcāla.[146] The first home of the Niṣādas may not have been far off from western U.P. The beginnings of the Brāhmaṇa literature are about contemporaneous with the final compilation of the Saṃhitās,[147] and the Brāhmaṇas are assigned to the tenth-seventh centuries B.C.[148] The latest of these to speak of the Niṣādas is the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, with its locale including eastern U.P. and north Bihar, west of the Gandak.[149] The Niṣādas were evidently a conspicuous group in the north-east by that time. The early Buddhist texts and the Jātakas generally represent a long period of development from Buddha's time (500 B.C.) down to the second or third century A.D.[150] and the earliest are in their present form not older than the second century B.C.[151] These reveal a concentration of the Niṣādas in this part of the country, though in numerous small pockets. The *Rāmāyaṇa*, which also belongs to the east,[152] takes note of a kingdom of the Niṣādas with Śṛṅgaverapura on the north side of the Ganga opposite Prayāga as its capital.[153] The *Vāyu Purāṇa* and the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* mention the Niṣādas as settled in the east along the Ganga.[154] It is difficult to speak of a Sūtra "epoch" as distinct from that of the Brāhmaṇas,[155] and some of the Śrautasūtras which speak of the Niṣādas are fairly old.[156] The *Śrautasūtras* of Āpastamba, Kātyāyana, Lāṭyāyana and Satyāṣāḍha are assigned to the period 800-400 B.C.,[157] the *Vārāha*

146. Weber, op. cit., p. 90.
147. Winternitz, op. cit., p. 195.
148. Renou, op. cit., p. 29. Chronologically, the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* of the *Black Yajurveda* is followed by the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* of the *Ṛgveda*, and then by the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* of that Veda.
149. R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*. 2nd edn (Delhi, 1968), p. 15.
150. Wagle, op. cit., p. 3.
151. Sharma, *Aspects*, p. 23.
152. Winternitz, op. cit., p. 507.
153. *Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa*, lxxxiii, 19. Unfortunately the chronology of the work is as yet unsettled.
154. Cited by D. C. Sircar, *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India* (Delhi, 1960), p. 64 and fn.
155. Renou, op. cit., p. 42.
156. Winternitz, op. cit., p. 278 and fn.
157. Kane, op. cit., p. xi.

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Śrautasūtra being a later work. Of these, the *Lāṭyāyana Śrautasūtra,* belonging to the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa,* has been connected with Lāṭa, a country in the west directly south of Saurastra in Gujarat.[158] If this identification is considered valid, the presence of the Niṣādas in the south-west is established. The *Mahābhārata,* which belongs to the west,[159] and contains, like the *Rāmāyaṇa,* older tradition, broadly agrees with the pattern discerned from the Vedic texts. The *Āraṇyaka Parva*[160] mentions Vinaśana or the place of the disappearance of the river Sarasvatī as the gate (*dvāram*) of the *niṣāda-rāṣṭra,* which place is identified as the area round the subdivisional town of Sirsa in the Hissar district[161] of Haryana. A Niṣāda settlement (*niṣāda-bhūmi*) is placed between Matsya and the Chambal,[162] and the Niṣādas appear in connection with the Vatsas and the Bhargas.[163] A Niṣāda named Kāyavya is described as *pāriyātracara.*[164] R. G. Bhandarkar[165] takes Pāriyātra to be that portion of the Vindhyas from which the Chambal and the Betwa rivers take their rise, while D. C. Sircar[166] applies the term to the western Vindhyas together with the Aravalli range. Sircar[167] places the subservient tribal state of the Niṣādas occurring in the Junagadh Inscription (A.D. 150) of Rudradāman I precisely here. Unfortunately, the entire Dharmaśāstra literature, covering a wide geographical area and spanning over a thousand years, chooses to treat the Niṣādas as a theoretical category rather than as a real social group; the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya is no exception. The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* of Varāhamihira[168] refers to a country of the Niṣādas to the south-

158. Weber, op. cit., p. 76.
159. Winternitz, op. cit., p. 507.
160. 130. 3-4.
161. Chaudhuri, op. cit., p. 43.
162. *Sabhā Parva,* 28.5.
163. Ibid. 27.9-10.
164. *Śānti Parva,* 135.5.
165. Cited by B. N. Puri, *India in the Time of Patañjali* (Bombay, 1957), p. 68.
166. Op. cit., p. 46 fn.
167. *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization,* i, 2nd edn (Calcutta University, 1965), no. 67, l. 11.
168. xiv, 10.

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east of Madhyadeśa. B. C. Law[169] wrongly identifies this as the Niṣāda kingdom of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. We have occasional subsequent epigraphic references to the Niṣādas further south. Pṛthvīvyāghra, a Niṣāda chieftain, is seen escaping to the northern region as a result of a Pallava offensive in A.D. 736.[170] The area would be Nellore-Guntur region.

We have thus a chronological view of the Niṣādas from the north to north-east, south-west, south-east and the south, a pattern which fits in with the movement of the Aryans in the counry. As D. N. Majumdar states,[171] the Indo-Aryans spread in two directions, one following the foothills of the Himalayas and the other through the south of Panjab, bifurcating into two streams, one moving along the courses of the rivers in northern India, the other spreading into Gujarat and the Deccan, Aryanizing wherever they passed through. The Niṣādas seem to have retained their tribal existence longer in the south, south-west and souh-east than in the north and north-east, where varṇa or social class superseded tribal elements earlier, and distinctions based on birth and occupation became sharp and wide in post-Vedic times.

169. Op. cit., p. 99.

170. *IA*, iii, 274, cited by R. N. Nandi, "Social and Religious Developments in the Deccan" [*c.* A.D. 600-1000] (Ph.D. thesis, Patna University, 1969), p. 138.

171. Op. cit., p. 29.

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Outline of the Structure of Ancient Indian Society

WALTER RUBEN

It is reasonable to look at the geographical background of the history of ancient India in order to describe the structure of her society. The sub-continent of India is on the one hand a well-defined unit which has proved basic for the unity of Indian culture. It is separated from other countries by the ocean and mountains. On the other hand it is divided into a certain number of regions with peculiar characteristics. Although the monsoon favours the whole of India with rains, rainfall differs from region to region. The climate with its dry and wet periods is fundamental for Indian agriculture, as is the enormous extent of the country, the existence of vast jungles in most parts, and the presence of wild rice, cotton plants, sugarcane and buffaloes in prehistoric times. Thus clearing the forest and preparing devices for watering the fields were necessary for getting good harvests. Such devices were mostly small tanks for preserving the water of the monsoon in the area of the village community. Consequently the village came to be bound for ever to its irrigated locality. The distance of the villages being great on account of the intervening forests, they became economically and socially independent of one another. They became small patriarchal republics, combining agriculture with cattle raising and some crafts (weaving, pottery, smithery, etc.). They were thus self-sufficient and stationary, although there took place some exchange of goods, some matrimonial and tribal inter-relations between villages, and

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some economic and social developments in the course of centuries. The mainly self-sufficient stationary village community itself was the result of a long prehistoric evolution; it may have assumed its classic form in the north of India extending up to the Narmada when the Aryans arrived in the Panjab in the second millennium B.C. From the third millennium B.C. the Panjab formed the most eastern region of the ancient Near East, connected by sea and land with the West, and by trade transgressing the natural north-western frontiers of the Indian subcontinent. From then on economic and political relations with the West went on up to our times. From the last centuries B.C. onwards trade by sea connected India with Indonesia and China so that India did no more remain the most eastern region of world's commerce but became an eastern centre of it, trading far beyond her natural eastern borderline. When the Aryan conquerors invaded her north-western frontier, the Indian subcontinent became closely connected with Central Asia. Similar waves of Asian conquerors reached India again and again, but the Aryan conquest proved to be of special importance. Only later, from Mauryan times onwards Indians went beyond their northern frontiers up to Tibet and Sinkiang. By the period of the Guptas South Asia became related to Central Asia as well as to the other Asian countries bordering it; it came into contact with Further India, China and the Near East, nay even Greece and Rome. This enormous historical process was possible because the Indians cleared the forests (one may estimate that one quarter of the forests was cleared up to the time of the Guptas), irrigated their fields, developed their handicrafts, and traded by land and sea.

The Aryans invaded the Panjab as nomad herdsmen, only temporarily settling down for ploughing some fields for barley. Their society belonged to the type of decaying gentile society, consisting of tribes under war leaders who were called kings. Classes had not yet developed, but the difference between the wealthy owners of herds of cattle and horses on the one hand and the poor people on the other had become already great. There were, it seems, some debt-servants but no slaves; the Ṛgvedic Aryans made no prisoners of war and possessed only some

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female slaves; male slaves, it seems, could not be made use of, nor could they be kept in obedience. The situation changed completely when some of the Aryans reached the Doab where they wandered no more in tribes, but settled down as adventurous princes together with their retinue consisting of some priests and herdsmen-warriors with great herds of cattle, and conquered territories. The pre-Aryan village communities, scattered in the vast forests, offered probably small resistance. Their inhabitants became the non-Aryan masses of peasants, the so-called śūdras, tilling as before the soil, breeding their cattle, staying in their old villages with their irrigated fields of paddy, sugarcane and cotton, accepting the plough of the conquerors and the wheat of the Indus valley civilization. Thus the then north Indian agriculture was very similar to that of our days, true to its stationary character with two or in some parts even three harvests every year.

As a result of the conquest of the Doab the Aryans settled down as masters of the non-Aryans. The conflict ended in the formation of the ancient Indian society. Its characteristic feature is the order of the four ranks (varṇa), the lowest being non-Aryan, the three higher ones Aryan. The lowest Aryan rank, the vaiśya, was assigned the śūdra's occupation—agriculture and cattle breeding plus handicrafts. No wonder, both these low ranks amalgamated in the village communities. Only in towns did some vaiśyas remain busy with trade. This amalgamation meant degradation of some Aryan vaiśyas to the śūdra rank as for example, *rathakāras*. But at the same time the śūdras succeeded in raising a little their social status. The śūdras had in consequence of the conquest first lost all their rights to the conquerors, even the right to live. Pardoned by the new masters, they had become their helot-like slaves. As some kind of prisoners of war, they had become slaves of this peculiar, primitive type; only some of them had become slaves of a patriarchal type, used in domestic work but not in production. Slowly these helot-like slaves became free peasants in so far as members of the fourth rank and at the same time members of village communities in a despotic state can be called free. The śūdras were the masses of agrarian producers and workers in handicrafts in their stationary

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village communities, now forming the masses of exploited people, i.e. forming a class which was opposed to that of the exploiters, the Aryans. The opposition of antagonistic classes made the formation of states necessary in order to preserve exploitation. The main type of state was despotism, one king being called *janaṃtapa*, oppressor of the people. Despotism was a common form of polity in the ancient Near East, but the ideologists of the despotic state did not like to speak of classes; they spoke of ranks instead. Every born brāhmaṇa belonged to the first rank, even if he was poor. The born śūdra remained a member of the lowest rank, even if he was rich. The ideologists of despotism laid stress on the hereditary principle, connecting exploitation with birth in every rank and contrasting as much as possible the Aryans with the non-Aryans. The form of society which emerged as a result of the Aryan conquest of the Doab with its stationary pre-Aryan village communities has been the peculiarity of India up to our own times. Probably in no other society is there a rank like that of the brāhmaṇa (a little similar were the Levites or the ancient Jews); nor do we get a counterpart of the Indian śūdra in any ancient society (except the few helots of ancient Sparta and some other Dorian states).

The Aryan conquerors lived mainly on the labour of suppressed non-Aryans. They appropriated the products of the village communities to themselves, leaving to the conquered helots as little as possible. Thus began the main conflict of ancient Indian society. The problem was to evolve some kind of law in order to regulate this division of products. The question was: Who had to till the fields, to breed the cattle and to work in handicrafts, and what part of the product would be given to the various social classes? Immediately after the conquest began the settlement of the Aryans and together with it the formation of states and the establishment of laws. The need of *dharma* was expressed in the oldest Upaniṣads and the oldest Dharmasūtras followed them. These avoided speaking of class struggle as mentioned above, but used the terminology of the order of the four ranks (*varṇadharma*), which is quite characteristic of despotism. Only some modern historians analysing the causes and course of the French revolution found and used the concept of classes. But

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in contrast to the Indian lawgivers already Solon had fixed the rights of the people of Athens according to their income.

The brāhmaṇical lawbooks dealt in the first place with the privileges of the brāhmaṇas and the other Aryans, the *dharma* of the four varṇas and *āśramas*. The king had to maintain this order and to make the śūdras work. He had to take from their products whatever was possible, the extent of exploitation being determined by the class sruggle between the non-Aryan masses of producers and the state apparatus of despotism. What the despot got he had to distribute among the two highest ranks, the kṣatriyas and the brāhmaṇas according to their relative strength. The brāhmaṇas from the very beginning demanded that the kings should assign to them what the villages owed to them in the form of revenues. Some of them thus obtained their share of the produce of the village community in perpetuity on the condition of enjoying it without much interference from the despot. The social practice which served the interests of the brāhmaṇas as the ideologists of despotism influenced juridical thinking in India. Indian law from then on did not deal either with classes or with the problems of property. The earliest legal texts are little interested in the problems of personal property, i.e. who is the owner of the field? Is it the tiller or the village community or the despot or the brāhmaṇa to whom the village has been donated or a kṣatriya who is sometimes mentioned as the master of a village? Is it the owner or his tenant? The Indian legal texts do not define carefully possession and property, *sva* and *bhoga*. In this regard they are quite different from the contemporary Roman law, which is classically clear on such points.

Together with state and law began the formation of religion in ancient India. If we leave aside the ideology of the Indus civilization for want of texts, it will appear that the Aryans as well as the pre-Aryan Mundas believed in magic and mythology but not in proper religion. The peculiar Indian variant of religion began only in the oldest Upaniṣads with the doctrine of rebirth and *karman*. Not only the Ṛgvedic Aryans but also the pre-Aryan Mundas believed in some gentile kind of rebirth of every soul inside the tribe or clan; a new-born child was named after a dead ancestor because it was regarded as his rebirth. But only

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in Yājñavalkya's religion was rebirth regulated by *karman* as solace for the exploited pious in his next life and as menace to the bad (rebellious) person. Rebirth and *karman* from the very beginning were connected with the order of ranks. Everybody was, according to this religious doctrine, himself responsible for his birth in this or that rank in this life or in the next one. In the same moral-religious sense this doctrine of transmigration of soul was connected with the promise of heaven and the menace of hell. At the same time began the pessimistic religious doctrine of all rebirth being nothing else than suffering and of *mokṣa* being the final goal of every pious being. After the freedom of gentile society, life in state society, especially under despotism, was suffering indeed, and religious solace in life after death and menace of hell in the existing life became a social necessity.

In the same period science began in India, especially medicine and astronomy. Astronomy was connected with religion and magic, but medicine stood in some kind of conflict with it. The Aśvins were regarded by the brāhmaṇas as somewhat "impure", and there was some competition between the magician and the physician, both claiming to be the proper healer of the diseased. But in the long run the brāhmaṇas succeeded in uniting most branches of science with religion. As the first rank they claimed successfully the privilege of being the only rank of intelligentsia usurping astronomy, mathematics, medicine, history, grammar, metrics, etc. Only the then doctrine of polity (*arthaśāstra*) was in a certain sense opposed to dharmaśāstra (although it was also taught by the brāhmaṇas), and so was perhaps economics (*vārtā*) of which we know nearly nothing.

With the beginning of science originated philosophy. Already the most primitive man had some kind of world-view (Weltanschauung), feeling himself as a member of the world order and expressing such feelings in mythological ways. But only when science and religion began did this world-view get the new quality of philosophy. In order to explain the ideas of rebirth and *karman,* of perishing impure body and eternal pure soul, of *ātman* (ego) and *brahman* (world order), and in order to make the religious goal of *mokṣa* plausible to the intellectual élite of brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas, Yājñavalkya founded the objective

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idealism of philosophy which was later called Vedānta. And probably deriving his clue from medical-biological problems of discussions on life, breath and water, on digestion, speech and fire, and on food, earth and body, Uddālaka founded in the same period his hylozoistic, i.e. materialistic, philosophy. He thought of the dialectical ways of eternal changing or becoming of the material (*sat*) whilst Yājñavalkya was more interested in the metaphysical thought of being. Thus in the same generation began idealism and materialism, dialectical and metaphysical thinking, and arose philosophy.

Leaving aside arts and music, something may be said about literature. The tradition of literature was oral in old times. Belonging to the first rank the brāhmaṇas regarded literature as their own privilege and as such did not commit their lyrics of the *Ṛgveda* or *ākhyānas* of the Brāhmaṇa period to writing. A little later appeared the pious lyrics of the Buddhist monks and nuns, who looked upon all this literature as the mental property of the Buddhist order. Further, there must have existed the oral literature of the forest tribes, and some predecessors of the later epics and Purāṇas, which formed the property of charioteer-bards (*sūtas*) of the kṣatriya dynasties. But when some centuries later war chariots and *sūtas* ceased to play an important role the brāhmaṇas of early Hinduism took over the epic and Purāṇic literature and gave it its final form. Only in the time of the Kuṣāṇas in the second century A.D. did the combined efforts of the foreigners who favoured Buddhism and of the *nāgarikas* of the then flourishing towns (well-to-do merchants who participated in the world commerce between Rome and China) succeed in breaking the privilege of the brāhmaṇas and making literature written and available to all educated people without regard to rank or caste.

Only then were the old Indian epics and Purāṇas also compiled with the intention of imparting moral and religious education to all people, including even śūdras who were not allowed to listen to the Vedas. In this way the development of ancient Indian literature is connected with the order of the four ranks, as is also the development of state, law, religion, science and philosophy. So far the Aryan literature was intimately connected with

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religion. Secular literature such as love poetry is only known from small fragments quoted by the grammarian Patañjali of the second century B.C., but Hāla has left us the oldest lyrical anthology, perhaps of Kuṣāṇa times. Only from then on individual poets such as Aśvaghoṣa, Hāla, Kālidāsa and others are known to us. Thus the changeover to written literature enabling literary geniuses to preserve their work from being forgotten, and the development of secular by the side of religious literature were the results of the struggle of progressive urban people against the privileges of the conservative priests.

In such a manner one can try to describe the structure of ancient Indian society, starting from the mainly agrarian production and from the relations of the different social strata to property, especially the soil. This implies that the village communities with their irrigated fields formed the basis for the order of ranks and the consequent ideological developments. But at the same time the impact of religious concepts such as *ahiṃsā* (non-violence) on agriculture as well as cattle breeding must not be overlooked. The village community being stationary, the social structure could not be flexible. There were no fundamental changes in Indian society up to the advent of capitalism. Certainly institutions and conceptions such as guild (*śreṇī*), caste (*jāti*), *bhaktī*, etc. were developed in the course of time, but the order of ranks (*varṇāśramadharma*) remained the basis for the ideological organization of society. If we want to combine the old and the new elements in the social development, we may regard the Indian society in the main as being a peculiar variant of what is called today by some historians the Asiatic mode of production, other variants being found in the ancient Near East, in China, some parts of Africa, and Latin America (Aztec, Inca, Maya). These civilizations also had village communities with irrigated fields as their base and were despotic in some way or the other. But the methods of irrigation were different. Thus it is possible to identify the general as well as the peculiar elements in all these cultures.

But at the same time the Indologist has to take note of the historical developments in India, slow as they may have been. The astonishing fact then is that in the centuries of

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European antiquity, like Greece and Rome, India also had slaves as the masses of producers, but not slaves in the Greek-Roman sense; the Indian counterpart of the slaves was provided by the helot śūdras. And to European feudalism corresponds its Indian variant with *sāmantas, mirāsdārs,* predial slaves, etc. Thus we may like to characterize Indian history as that of a society based on the Indian variant of the Asiatic mode of production with strong elements of slavery in antiquity and of feudalism in the middle ages, succeeded by capitalism which mainly came to India in the form of British colonialism till capitalist India became independent in 1947.

In contrast to the Asiatic mode of production we speak of the Greek-Roman mode of production of antiquity. This was not in the main agrarian, nor did the irrigation of fields or the typical village community play any important role in European antiquity. Only in Sparta were the helots the masses of producers, not in Athens, Corinth, Miletus, Rome or the other towns which were characteristic of European antiquity. In the estates of the aristocracy and in the workshops of merchants in the towns, slaves of the Greek-Roman type were the exploited class, which is to be compared with and contrasted to the Indian śūdra rank. This difference depends to a large extent on the geographical position of Greece-Rome, which, in contrast to the Indian subcontinent, consisted of the two small peninsulas, of a great number of islands and of a portion of the coast of the Mediterranean sea. The soil of Greece being poor, import of wheat was necessary, and it was made possible by the export of the goods produced by handicrafts practised by slaves who were also imported in exchange of goods. Trade by sea made towns necessary, and in the towns the rich class fought for an aristocratic form of government, while the poor fought for the democratic form. Thus there did not develop a rank of priests such as the brāhmaṇas; priests were officials elected by the people. Trade also made the development of sciences necessary, and physics as well as mathematics influenced philosophy. Trade and democracy also made Roman law necessary and possible, which was separated from religious and moral considerations. Literature was at first in the hands not of priests but of the bards who

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composed epics first for the aristocrats and then for the rich living in the towns. Lyrics were composed very early by individual poets, who participated in the struggle for and against democracy.

Thus in whatever way one looks at the problem, the structure and development of Greek-Roman culture appear basically different from that of ancient India. However, in India as well as in European antiquity we notice the common fundamental development from gentile society through slave holding and feudalism to capitalism, which in parts of Europe has led to socialism, which is also accepted as a goal of many Indians today. If then we try to find the place of Indian society in the development of mankind, we have to start from gentile society with its numberless variants, one group of them being that of the pre-Aryans in northern India, another being that of the Ṛgvedic Aryans, a third group being that of pre-Greek tribes, and a fourth that of the Greeks penetrating in several waves of tribes into Greece. The Aryans in the Panjab conquered the easternmost region of the ancient Near East while the Greeks conquered the westernmost region of it, the so-called Minoan society. Thus two Indo-European groups in similar stages of evolution almost simultaneously conquered primitive and highly developed civilizations. From then on India in Asia as well as Greece-Rome in Europe went through the common stages of evolution, namely from gentile through slave holding and feudal up to capitalist societies. On the other hand India shared her basic Asiatic mode of production with the majority of mankind, with the higher developed civilizations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. But finally it is the main duty of the Indologist to find out the peculiarities which distinguish the Indian social system from European as well as from other developments and make India an individual, a personality, as it was called by B. Subbarao.*

* *Personality of India* (Baroda, 1958). This outline is a short summary of five volumes in German on the development of ancient Indian society of which two have been published.

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Social Mobility in Ancient India with Special Reference to Élite Groups

ROMILA THAPAR

D. D. Kosambi made a major contribution to our understanding of the ancient Indian social structure.[1] Its study involves an examination of at least two major aspects of a society—the functioning of its social groups and their mobility in so far as it can be measured. In the case of ancient India the problem is clouded by the lack of precise evidence which can be used to formulate exact and verifiable hypotheses. It is partly for this reason that this article is confined to élite groups. Much of our ancient source material refers comparatively more fully to the upper sections of society; the study of the lower sections has to be far more deductive. Nevertheless an intensive study of the social structure of ancient India is an urgent necessity because only on its basis can meaningful generalizations be made about the nature of Indian society and consequently of the pattern of Indian history. My intention here is to draw attention to some of the more relevant aspects of a study of élite in early India. I have tried to draw on non-Dharmaśāstra sources as often as possible, largely because in the historical context such sources point to some interesting deviations from the norm as obtained from the Dharmaśāstras. The study generally relates to northern

1. I have in mind his articles in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, lxxv (1955), 35 ff, 226 ff and *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, xxvi (1950-51) and xxvii (1951-52).

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India, since it is impossible to generalize about the entire sub-continent as a single unit in any period.

The attempt to discuss social mobility for a period for which there is little or no demographic evidence and for which the precise nature of economic institutions is not definitely known is perhaps merely an exercise in a series of hypotheses. An important element in the study of élite groups is their size in relation to the society to which they belong. This cannot be properly calculated for early India since no statistics are available. At best inferences can be drawn from the sources. A detailed study of technology, particularly agricultural, would be useful. Here archaeological evidence may provide some clues. Technology as the basis of the economy could suggest approximate sizes for human habitations. A detailed study of urban sites, excavated to date, may also suggest population sizes in various forms and changes in population sizes through the centuries. Associated with the study of agricultural technology would be the question of the availability of waste land. References to uncultivated areas may be collected and comparative charts made of the encroachment into waste land because of population pressure.[2] As long as waste land was available for settlement, one avenue of social mobility would be available. Literary references to population figures cannot be totally ignored. The *Skanda Purāṇa,* for example, gives us the figure of 96 crores of *grāmas* in the whole of Bhāratavarṣa.[3] Even if we take the *grāma* to mean inhabitants rather than a regular village, the figure is clearly exaggerated. What is interesting however is the distribution of population in various parts of Bhāratavarṣa. A study of the figures suggests areas of heavier population such as Kānyakubja and Gauda (36 lakhs and 18 lakhs) and areas of sparse population such as Saurāṣṭra (55,000). Allowing for ecological factors creating such discrepancies, it would all the same be worthwhile to inquire whether there is evidence of greater mobility in the more sparsely populated areas. Similarly epigraphic evidence relating to land grants

2. The Purāṇas, for example, refer to such areas. See S. M. Ali, *The Geography of the Purāṇas* (New Delhi, 1966), p. 134.

3. *Maheśvara Khaṇḍa,* 39. v. 127 ff.

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also occasionally mentions figures of *grāmas*.[4] Figures from these sources can also be collated and compared with those from literary sources.

Certain broad phases of economic change in northern India during the period from 1000 B.C. to A.D. 1000 can be recognized. The earliest Vedic literature comes from a background of pastoralism giving way gradually to agricultural settlements. Early Buddhist literature suggests a more settled agrarian economy and an emergent commercial-urban economy. The Mauryan period (fourth and third centuries B.C.) saw the development of an imperial system based on an agrarian economy. The subsequent five centuries saw a series of small kingdoms ruling in various parts of the sub-continent and at the same time a tremendous expansion in both internal and foreign trade. The Gupta period (fourth and fifth centuries A.D.) marked the beginning of a major change in the agrarian system with the assignment of land grants and revenue grants to both religious and secular assignees resulting in a new politico-economic structure in many parts of the sub-continent.[5] The changing character of economic relationships inhibits any attempt at uniform generalizations about society for the entire period of early India.

Changes at the level of élite groups were most obviously brought about by foreign invasions and migrations. The migration of the Aryan-speaking peoples starting in *c.* 1500 B.C. brought in the new Aryan élite. The campaign of Alexander may have been too brief to seriously disturb the centres of power in the Panjab and Sind. But the invasions of the Indo-Greeks, Śakas and Kuṣāṇas in the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. clearly did affect Indian society in the northern and western parts of the sub-continent. The impact of the Hūṇa invasions in the fifth century A.D. was felt as far as the heart-land of the Ganga. The migrations of peoples from Central Asia to northern and western India in the post-Gupta period produced even greater impact. The gradual penetration of the Aryan culture south of the

4. e.g. Aihole Inscription of Pulekeśin II, *EI*, vi. 1 ff; Malkapur Inscription of the Kalacuri dynasty, *JAHRS*, iv (1929), 156.

5. Cf. R. S. Sharma, "Stages in Ancient Indian Economy", *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy* (Bombay, 1966), pp. 52-89.

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Vindhyas created its problems for the local élite. The migrations affected status relationships inasmuch as the rules of endogamy had to be adjusted to allow for hypergamy.

The causes which arise from within a society and which provide a more meaningful picture of social change are less obvious. Analytical studies of society in early India have in the past been hampered by two assumptions which were accepted unquestioningly by most historians. First of all, it was assumed that society in early India remained in a more or less frozen condition throughout the period under consideration, registering only a marginal social change. Secondly, this argument sought support from the varṇa concept which was believed to be an actual description of the social functioning and which had as its essentials a rigidly structured society based on a hierarchy of status. Both these assumptions have now been questioned. A re-examination of the evidence suggests periods of change which influenced social institutions as well as other aspects of life. The varṇa concept, it has been suggested, may always have been largely a theoretical model and never an actual description of society. Our information on the varṇa concept comes largely from the Dharmaśāstras, and the description of it in these sources is not always corroborated, and occasionally even contradicted, by other sources. For our purposes however it may be worthwhile to use the varṇa model as the starting-point and see how the evidence conforms to it or contradicts it.

The concept of varṇa was closely tied up with the concept of *dharma* in the sense of a universal law. Thus the *varṇadharma* was the attempt to establish a social law or a systematic functioning of society which would ensure its well-being. It was stated that society was made up of four orders, and later a fifth order was added. The first four were the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra, of which the first three were regarded as *dvija* or twice-born. The fifth order was later identified with the untouchables. According to the *puruṣasūkta* the four groups were divinely created and arose out of the great god Prajāpati.[6] This imbued the scheme with sanctity. The concept of varṇa assumes

6. *Ṛgveda*, x, 97.

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the following characteristics: status by birth, a hierarchical ordering of social units and rules of endogamy and ritual purity. Clearly it depicts a rigid social system. Theoretically there were only two obvious means of improving status. One was by opting out of society and becoming an ascetic. The other was by ensuring rebirth in a higher social status in one's next life, and here the social implications of the idea of *karma* are significant. However, mobility was not totally excluded from this scheme. Downward mobility was easy enough. Upward mobility was far more difficult and not open to the individual. It could be rendered possible nevertheless *via* the group, through a period of time (over several generations), and was further facilitated by a change in habitation or geographical location. The concept of varṇa was based on a variety of factors, such as, the idea of pollution extending to social hierarchies, clearly defined and recognized specialization of labour and differentiation between occupations, and the maintaining of distinctions between ethnic and regional populations. So much for the varṇa model. Here the élite would be a closed group with perhaps a limited horizontal mobility but no upward mobility. Recruitment to each group would be strictly through birth.

The definition of élite as functional groups with high status raises a problem in the early Indian context since status has to be evaluated from two points of view—ritual status and actual status in terms of economic and political power. These two levels of status frequently confuse the picture of social stratification as the separation between the two is not always clearly maintained. Brāhmaṇical literature is more concerned with the order of ritual status and this is what it describes. It is not concerned with how a group arrived at a particular status. We are concerned here not with ritual status alone but also with actual status and its relationship with ritual status. Ideas of ritual status owe their origin to the concept of pollution which may have been current in the pre-Aryan period. Pollution was controlled through the functioning of two taboos—the taboo regarding kinship in the context of marriage and the concern for eating with or taking food from only those ritually permitted. The taboo on not touching the ritually impure gained in importance gradu-

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ally. As long as endogamous and exogamous rules of marriage and rules of commensality were observed and maintained, the social identity of these groups in a caste structure would continue, and the acquiring of ritual status be necessary. It was the concern with ritual status which led to the theory of mixed castes—*varṇa-saṃkara*—which castes are looked down upon as ritually impure. In a standard Dharmaśāstra such as that of Manu the mixed castes were occasionally occupational groups but generally those tribes which obviously were not easily assimilated into Aryan society.[7] What is interesting is that these tribal names continue to occur with separate identities right up to the medieval period.[8] Thus we are told that a brāhmaṇa marrying a vaiśya woman produces children who are categorized as the Ambaṣṭha; the later Purāṇas refer to the Ambaṣṭha tribe as deriving its origin from the Ānava kṣatriyas and the tribal identity remains.[9] A brāhmaṇa marrying a śūdra woman resulted in a Niṣāda.[10] This appears to have been an aboriginal tribe. It is curious that the Niṣāda and Śūdra tribes are described as neighbours, which would perhaps explain why it was necessary for a śūdra to be one of the parents. Clearly the tribes which were not assimilated had to be given a ritual status in the system and thus the theory of mixed castes was worked out.

On the basis of varṇa the élite would be a closed group with little or no upward mobility. Recruitment to each group would be strictly through birth. The élite would be drawn from the first three orders—brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya and vaiśya—the orders which constituted the *dvija* or twice-born castes. But since the varṇa stratification cuts across economic lines, a further selection may be necessary. Members of the brāhmaṇa group because of their ritual status would automatically be a part of the élite irrespective of their economic status. This would apply to some extent to the kṣatriyas as well. But the case of vaiśyas would be

7. *Manu*, x. 6-56.

8. This is evident if one compares the lists in *Manu* with those of the ethnic groups mentioned in the later Purāṇas.

9. *Manu*, x. 8; Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* (London, 1922), p. 109.

10. *Manu*, x. 18.

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more complex since this category could well include members of a low economic group, who, although included in the élite by virtue of being vaiśyas, would nevertheless not actually be a part of the élite. Non-brāhmaṇical literature does however refer to impoverished brāhmaṇas in the early part of our period. It would seem therefore that ritual status was not sufficient for membership of the élite.

The theoretical origin of the varṇa system is usually traced to the *puruṣasūkta*. Yet it seems very obvious that this was a later addition to the *Ṛgveda*. Not only is the tenth *maṇḍala* believed to be a late addition, but the evidence of the hymn itself suggests that it is an interpolation. Of the four varṇas mentioned only the brāhmaṇas are referred to in other parts of the *Ṛgveda*. The other three, listed as rājanya, vaiśya and śūdra, are mentioned for the one and only time in the *Ṛgveda* in this hymn. Even the term brāhmaṇa, although it referred to a priest, did not necessarily mean one who guides the sacrifice.[11] A kṣatriya was permitted to officiate at his own sacrifice. Evidently even if a proto-caste society existed during the Ṛgvedic period, the theoretical model had not been fully formed as yet. A pristine stage of casteless society is projected in the tradition of the *kṛta* age, the first of the four *yugas*.[12] The terminology used for the castes has its own interest. The terms brāhmaṇa and vaiśya are used more in the sense of people with particular vocations—the special priesthood in the one case, the commoners of the tribe given to agriculture and trade in the other. But the terms rājanya (and later kṣatriya) and śūdra are either tribal names or words qualifying a category of tribes. The existence of the Rājanya tribe is attested by both literary and numismatic sources well inside the historical period.[13] Perhaps the occupational term rājanya, meaning a member of the royal family or a noble, may be an extended meaning of the original term derived from the tribe with an oligarchic system. The identification of the śūdras with a tribe is far more conclu-

11. *Ṛgveda*. x. 98; *Nirukta*, ii. 10.

12. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. i. 3.

13. *Pāṇini*, iv. 2. 53; Rapson (ed), *The Cambridge History of India*, i (Cambridge, 1921), 528.

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sively stated in a variety of literary sources.[14] The varṇa category may have originated from the low status of this tribe vis-à-vis Aryan society. The fact that the status of the śūdras was low is clearly indicated by their association with the Niṣāda, the Ābhīra and the Malla, the first two being regarded as mixed castes and the third as *vrātya*. The *vrātyas* remain something of a puzzle.[15] But whether Aryan or non-Aryan, they were looked down upon and held as inferior. The indication that the *vrātyastoma* is at first an initiation ritual and finally takes on the form of an expiation ritual would support the fact of a less exalted position of the *vrātya*.

It may therefore be suggested that the key to the understanding of the varṇa system lies not in seeing it as a framework of hierarchical layers of social orders each fitting neatly below the other. It may be more meaningful to see it as a series of vertical parallels, each varṇa (pure or mixed) as an independent entity with its own hierarchy based either on a tribal identity or an occupational identity. Furthermore, the *jāti* identity would be subsumed within this hierarchy. When the concept of the social structure was first formulated as a theory it may have been felt that the four categories were adequate. Gradually when they were seen to be inadequate the idea of *varṇasaṃkara* was added and enlarged upon. Thus the original references to the rājanyas and the kṣatriyas may not have been to such groups within each tribe, but to an entire tribe which was referred to by either of these names. The names seem to have been applied to those tribes in particular which had a distinctly oligarchic/republican system, with a representative of each family participating in the government.[16] The increasing familiarity with the kṣatriya tribes led to the adoption of the term kṣatriya in lieu of rājanya. Once the fourfold category had been accepted, there was no attempt to alter the basic structure, which had in any case been given divine sanction by the later Vedic period. New castes arising

14. *Mahābhārata*, vi. 9. 67; ii, 32. 10; *Mahābhāṣya*, i. 2, 3; Megasthenes; *Indika*, 287; *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, ii. 3. 16; *Kūrma Purāṇa*, i. 47. 40.

15. Cf. A. C. Banerjee, *Studies in the Brāhmaṇas* (Delhi, 1963), p. 81 f.

16. This may also be a comprehensible explanation of the reference to persons such as Paraśurāma destroying the kṣatriyas.

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either out of tribal associations, such as the Gonds, or out of occupational associations, such as the kāyasthas, were treated as mixed castes deriving their origin from a combination of partners from the original four. Insistence on ritual status was necessary because each new caste had to be fitted into the ritual hierarchy. Ritual status was firm and fixed, irrespective of what the actual status of a caste might be. Social mobility therefore in Indian society did not necessarily mean a change in the actual status of a caste, but perhaps more often the attempt to improve the ritual status or else to deny its importance. That the listing of varṇa-occupations in the Dharmaśāstra[17] was largely theoretical (although in origin it appears to have been descriptive of actual functioning) is suggested by the large number of instances provided by non-Dharmaśāstra sources of occupations directly conflicting with those legitimized by the varṇa theory. It is precisely this contradiction which enables one to suggest that in terms of actual status there was mobility. The survival of caste is partly because of the continuance of marriage and kinship rules and partly because the economic relationships are also an integral part of this structure. The opposition to caste therefore would be primarily aimed at the abolition of the ritual status aspect of its structure.

Had the varṇa system functioned as a superimposed hierarchical layer of social groups, the distinctions between the four main groups and the other permutations and combinations would have remained very clear and distinct. What is curious however is that while the identity of the brāhmaṇa and the untouchable is generally clear, references to the intermediate groups often appear to be of a rather confused, if not contradictory, kind.

A clearer definition of these categories can perhaps be obtained from the Buddhist sources, particularly the texts in Pali. Here the fourfold division of brāhmaṇa, khattiya, vessa and sudda is recognized in terms of social categories, but not always as actual social units. The first two groups can be identified with actual social units, but the second two are left vague. The references to varṇa in general are not always precise or necessarily identi-

17. *Manu*, x. 47-49.

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fied with Indian society. We are told for example that in the region of Yona and Kāmboja (north-west India) there are two vaṃas, the master and the slave and these are interchangeable.[18] For purposes of actual social functioning kinship relationships appear to be more relevant.

Judging from the Pali literature the twofold division of society into upper and lower categories (*ukkaṭṭhajāti, hīnajāti*) constituting the vaṃa seems to have been more commonly in use. The upper category is frequently described as consisting of the brāhmaṇa, khattiya and *gahapati*.[19] The identification of the brāhmaṇa is quite clear. The term khattiya (Sanskrit kṣatriya) is generally used for the ruling families of the oligarchies or what a recent writer has called the extended kin-groups,[20] such as those of the Śākyas, Mallas, Licchavis, etc. many of which constituted themselves into the oligarchies or republics of northern India in the sixth century B.C. Thus according to this literature, the use of the term kṣatriya would be limited to those who traditionally held political power particularly in a non-monarchical system and who belonged to an extended kin-group.

The term *gahapati* can also be identified in precise social terms as the affluent householder. The wealth of the *gahapati* derived either from his owning land or from his being a wealthy merchant, in which case he was called a *seṭṭhi-gahapati*. It is significant that although there is an occasional reference to the brāhmaṇa *gahapati* as the brāhmaṇa who had received a donation of land, there is never a reference to a khattiya *gahapati*. Possibly the political status of the khattiya subsumed extensive land ownership, and his inherent political status was superior to the wealth of the *gahapati*. Since this was a period when commercial activity was nascent, political status in itself had a value. There is rarely any marked tension between the khattiya and the *gahapati*, even though the more wealthy *gahapatis* being the chief donors are often the centres of attention. The tension is more frequent between the brāhmaṇa and the khattiya.

18. *Majjhima Nikāya* (referred to hereafter as *Maj. N.*), ii. 149.
19. *Vinaya Piṭaka* (mentioned hereafter as *Vin. P.*), iv.
20. N. Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha* (Bombay, 1963), p. 35.

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The same tension is reflected in some sections of Vedic literature, and it seems to have gradually increased in time. The Purāṇas presumably harking back to an earlier period mention kṣatriyas who carry out brāhmaṇical functions. The tension revolved around the competition for ritual status and the distribution of spiritual and temporal power, and was easier to define in a monarchical system. Not surprisingly it was in a monarchical structure that a working arrangement was gradually fashioned. The ritual status of the brāhmaṇa and the kṣatriya was kept distinct. It was clear that aspiration to political power could not be strictly limited to the kṣatriya caste, and therefore a concession had to be made. The concession appears to have been that a king of non-kṣatriya origin had to seek validation and be proclaimed of kṣatriya origin and be given an appropriate genealogy. Thus although in theory kingship was the prerogative of the kṣatriyas alone, in fact the office was frequently held by non-kṣatriyas. By seeking validation the ritual status in the brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya relationship was preserved. It also illustrates more clearly the distinction between ritual status and actual status by the fact that a person of non-kṣatriya origin could be given kṣatriya status when he became a king. The superior ritual status of the brāhmaṇa lay in the fact that he provided the validation. But this working arrangement took many centuries to evolve and did not come into practice in any extensive way until about the Gupta period.

The ritual superiority of the brāhmaṇa over the kṣatriya was originally established in part by associating the king with the gods. It is possible to trace the gradual evolution of the idea of kingship from a secular function of leadership and protection to being divinely appointed and finally to being constituted of divine elements.[21] However, the idea of divinity was a limited one since the king was never a god-king or worshipped as a deity. The channels of divinity were the royal sacrifices—*rājasūya, vājapeya, aśvamedha,* etc.—for the performance of which the

21. *Ṛgveda,* x. 173; *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* (mentioned hereafter as *Sat. Br.*), ii. 6; *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (referred to hereafter as *Ait. Br.*), vii. 7; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* i. 4. 11; *Śānti Parva* (hereafter *Śānti P.*), 59; *Manu,* vii. 8.

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presence of the priest was essential. The idea of divinity was never exploited to any significant degree by Indian rulers. The kings who did claim descent from the gods were the Kuṣāṇas who took the title of *devaputra*.[22] It has been suggested that this was an imitation of the Chinese title Son-of-Heaven. In the post-Gupta period royal titles rarely refer to divine descent, and even the Dharmaśāstra literature in effect pays little attention to the question of the king's direct relation with the gods. The idea of divinity seems to have been influential during the earlier phases of the establishment of monarchies and appears to have been more closely associated with the magical belief in the king as the insurance against evil. For the kingdoms of the post-Gupta period the validation of kṣatriya status assumed greater importance.

The validation of kṣatriya status was essentially an attempt to prove status by birth and to acquire the appropriate and legitimate lineage. The first major example of validation occurs in the Purāṇas. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, composed in the Gupta period, lists in its section on dynastic chronicles the various dynasties and kings who were believed to have ruled in northern India from a period of mythological beginning to the coming of the Hūṇas.[23] The earlier dynasties are all neatly classified into two categories—the *Sūryavaṃśī* (Sun-Family) and the *Candravaṃśī* (Moon-Family), both having as their common ancestor the hermaphrodite son of Manu, the primeval man. Apart from the symbolic significance of this myth, the system itself became the prototype of all rulers seeking kṣatriya genealogies, since the *Sūrvavaṃśa* and the *Candravaṃśa* became the two major royal traditions.

It is clear from the Purāṇas that in the earlier period not every dynasty had sought validation. Some were not only of non-kṣatriya origin but also did not bother to acquire the right genealogies, and the period from about the fourth century B.C. to the fourth century A.D. saw considerable neglect in this matter. Thus the Purāṇas refer to the Nandas who had a śūdra association, to the Mauryas who were of low origin, to

22. *EI*, ix. 239.
23. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, iv. 1.

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the Yavanas and the Śakas who were foreign and grudgingly conceded the status of degenerate kṣatriyas or śūdras, and worse still to the Hūṇas who had openly to be called *mleccha* (the impure).[24] In the case of the Yavanas and the Śakas it was a question of reconciling political status with ritual status. Manu does not seem to be too clear as to exactly what status they were to be given. At one point we are told that they are *vrātya*-kṣatriyas and are to be given the status of śūdras, but in the very next verse we are told that all those whose origin is other than that described in the *puruṣasūkta* are to be regarded as *dasyus* irrespective of whether they speak the language of the Aryans or that of the *mleccha*.[25] Patañjali refers to a special category of śūdras, the *aniravasita*, who, presumably because of their actual status, were regarded as clean and therefore not polluting.[26] The contradictions seem to have been resolved by the Śakas themselves, who in their inscriptions of the early centuries A.D. claim kṣatriya status.[27] It is perhaps ironical that precisely the kings who were given *vrātya*-kṣatriya and śūdra status took exalted imperial titles such as *Basileus Besileon* and set the fashion for later-day Indian royal titles such as *mahārājādhirāja*.

In the post-Gupta period the position begins to change, and particularly after the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. there is a rush for fabrication of genealogies proving the *Sūryavaṃśī* or *Candravaṃśī* origin of local dynasties. This is evident from the genealogies of the Rajput kings; even more interesting is the case of the Gonds of central India who provided a dynasty of the Candella kings and claimed *Candravaṃśī* status.[28] It would seem from this that the stabilization of the ritual status vis-à-vis the actual status with reference to brāhmaṇa and kings was achieved in the post-Gupta period. Some of the historical dynasties ruling in the earlier part of our period, as we have seen,

24. Ibid. iv. 21-24
25. *Manu*, x. 43-45.
26. *Mahābhāṣya*, i. 4. 10.
27. *EI*, viii.
28. Kauthem Plates, *IA*, xvi (1887), 21; Kalyan Inscription, *Bombay Gazetteer*, i, ii, 339; Khajuraho Stone Inscription of Dhaṅga, *EI*, i, 124.

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ruled without acquiring ritual status. This may have been owing at least to two reasons: one, that the actual status of the brāhmaṇas was not as yet sufficiently powerful to demand the validation of dynasties; and two, that many of the north Indian dynasties were those of foreign conquerors (the Indo-Greeks, the Śakas, the Kuṣāṇas, etc.) and would therefore not require validation. Possibly the rise to political power was faster in the post-Gupta period, and recent memories of low caste origins had to be more rapidly expunged. A further reason for giving the genealogy in the inscription was to prove that the grant was legally valid as well. Provision of genealogies was accompanied by an attempt to emulate the kṣatriya kings of the past and appropriate the functions (at least in theory) of the kṣatriya model as described in the Dharmaśāstra texts. The increasing importance of validation through genealogies was perhaps one of the reasons for the declining interest in association with divinity. Again, it was only the brāhmaṇas who could provide the genealogies of the new kings. The rise and multiplication of small, regional kingdoms during this period provided both work and status for the genealogists. The traditional castes of chroniclers and bards—the *sūta* and *māgadha*—had been reduced to a low position in the hierarchy of status,[29] and royal genealogies were firmly in the hands of the brāhmaṇas. Medhātithi, writing his commentary on Manu in the ninth century A.D., concedes that the office of kingship could be extended to anyone who had acquired a throne.[30] Hsüan Tsang mentions kings of all the four castes who were ruling in various parts of India when he visited the country.[31]

Ritual status gave the brāhmaṇas a unique position. The insistence on recruitment by birth had to be more carefully observed owing to the ritual purity of their religious function. Instances of non-brāhmaṇas being recruited to the ranks of brāhmaṇas are mentioned, but these are rare and are always referred to as something distinctly unusual. Yet some form of

29. *Manu*, x. 26.
30. On *Manu*, iv. 84.
31. T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, ii (London, 1905), 186, 250, 252.

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recruitment must have existed to account for the growth of brāhmaṇa numbers with the spread of "Aryanization" in the sub-continent. This was presumably done either through hypergamy or through the recruitment of local cult priests, the latter process being the equivalent in social terms to the absorbing of the local cult into the "Great Tradition" of Hinduism. But the process is nowhere clearly indicated, perhaps for obvious reasons. However, hints of status-gradation amongst the brāhmaṇas do occur. Thus we are told in Buddhist sources that the *udicca* brāhmaṇas from the Kuru-Pañcāla area looked down upon the *satakalakkhana* brāhmaṇas who were from further east, from Magadha.[32] The latter are said to indulge in magical and other practices which were not approved of by the former. In the early part of our period the brāhmaṇas of Magadha were looked down upon even in brāhmaṇical sources, and are referred to as the "so-called" brāhmaṇas. The phrase *magadhadeśīya brahmabandhu* carries obvious contempt.[33] This probably arose at a time when Magadha had not come within the direct orbit of Aryan brāhmaṇism and its brāhmaṇas therefore continued various non-Aryan practices. In the post-Gupta period the eastern brāhmaṇas became the more established group and began to migrate to the new kingdoms where they were very much in demand, as is evident from the frequent mention of Gauḍa brāhmaṇas and those of Mithila in inscriptions. This was the period when western Indian brāhmaṇas, the Maga, the Bhojaka and the Sakadvīpī, who had been regarded with some suspicion from the point of view of ritual status, were beginning to establish their *bona fides*.[34] The process of the assimilation of the Maga brāhmaṇas, who practised cults deeply influenced by sun-worship, is characteristic of the acquiring of brāhmaṇa status by rather similar groups. So low was their position within the brāhmaṇa hierarchy that the brāhmaṇas are contemptuously described as associating with the *mleccha-*

32. *Jātakas*, i. 324; ii. 83; iii. 232; v. 193, 227.
33. *Ait. Br.*, vii. 27.
34. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, xii. 1. 38-39; *Harṣacarita*, iv; E. C. Sachau (ed. & tr.), *Alberuni's India*, i. (London, 1910), 21.

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vaṃśa,[35] although in the *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* they acquire respectability. It could be argued that every tribe or occupational group had its own priests to minister to its religious needs, and as the tribe or the group moved up in the social scale and improved its ritual status, the priests likewise moved into and up in the brāhmaṇa hierarchy. This could account for the curious phenomenon of the Ābhīra brāhmaṇas or the obvious implications of the myth concerning the origin of the Chitpāvan brāhmaṇas in more recent times. This would also suggest fresh orientations to the history of religious movements, which would need to be studied to a far greater extent in the context of social orders. A religious movement could also become a mechanism for social mobility.

Ritual status did not however prevent the brāhmaṇas from participating in other activities open to other members of the élite. Brāhmaṇa dynasties did not have to seek validation. Thus the Śuṅgas and the Kaṇvas and many other brāhmaṇa families ruled in various parts of India. Even the more obviously kṣatriya position of being a military commander was on occasion held by a brāhmaṇa.[36] A close association with political power was maintained through the office of the *purohita* or the *rāja-guru*. In the early texts the work of the *purohita* appears to have been largely of a religious if not of a magical nature.[37] By the medieval period the office of the *purohita* is not only frequently hereditary but has also been politicalized.[38] The gradual politicalization of the office of the *purohita* can also be seen in the *purohita* becoming a check on the monarch.[39] The fact that the right to legitimate political opposition is also limited to the brāhmaṇa is pertinent.[40] In the eleventh-century Kashmir we notice a conflict between the brāhmaṇas and the king in which the former resort to their legiti-

35. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, i. 306-14.
36. An obvious example is Puṣyamitra, the founder of the Śuṅga dynasty.
37. *Ait. Br.*, vii. 24-26; *Śat. Br.*, iv. 4. 6; *Manu*, vii. 78.
38. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, v. 465; viii. 900.
39. *Yājñavalkya*, i. 312; *Vasiṣṭha*, xix.
40. *Anuśāsana Parva*, 61.

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mate right.[41] Further association with political power and administration was through the channel of ministers to the king and the bureaucracy.[42] The *mantri-pariṣad* (ministerial council) and the *amātyas* (ministers) may often have been brāhmaṇas or members of the royal family. The qualifications demanded of a minister, such as familiarity with the Dharmaśāstra and the Arthaśāstra works, would often have precluded all but the brāhmaṇas. The king and the brāhmaṇas were theoretically the upholders of law—*dharma* in its various manifestations.[43] The power relationship between the king and his ministers was essentially based on the personality of each, and therefore varied considerably.

The caste composition of the bureaucracy is almost impossible to determine, since references are generally to the office and not to the name of the officer. Some inferences can be drawn from the descriptions of the functions of the officers. Viceroys and governors are often referred to as being either related to or associated with the royal family. If the royal family had been of low caste origin and had sought validation then presumably the validation would be extended to more than just the immediate members of the king's family. The more senior officials, such as the revenue collectors, the treasurers and those concerned with legal matters, might well have been of brāhmaṇa origin as they would require a background of formal education. The same was probably true of the important but less exalted rank of scribes, recorders and accountants. This stratum of the administrative hierarchy was not however restricted to the brāhmaṇas alone. From the Gupta period onwards there is occasional mention of the kāyasthas who served as scribes.[44] They wrote documents, maintained revenue records and assisted the judges. By the ninth century the kāyasthas had evolved into a caste and were given a low ritual status, described as originating from the intermixing of brāhmaṇa and śūdra.

41. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, iv. 122-25; vi. 336; vii. 400.
42. *Śānti P.*, 80-84; *Arthaśāstra*, i.
43. *Gautama*, viii; *Vasiṣṭha*, ix.
44. *Yājñavalkya*, i. 336; Damodarpur Copper Plate Inscription of Budhagupta, *EI*, xv, 138; Kanaswa Inscription, *IA*, xix (1899), 55.

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By the eleventh century they were such a widespread caste that they had to take local descriptive names, such as the Gauḍa kāyasthas from eastern India or the Vālabhya kāyastha-*vaṃśa*. Some rose to high office, received land grants, held feudatory status under the Gahaḍavālas, Candellas and others, and patronized religion. They were scorned by the brāhmaṇas because of their low ritual status and yet at the same time feared since the kāyasthas had access to wealth and political power in some parts of the country by the eleventh century.[45] The rise of the kāyasthas is a good example of the upward mobility of an occupational group, caused by the administrative and economic needs for scribes and administrators, which situation was fully exploited by the kāyasthas to establish their actual status. At the lower levels of administration it is likely that the officials were locally appointed and became hereditary, as in the medieval and later periods. At the village level officers may not have been brought in from elsewhere. The majority of the administrative functionaries would probably have been local non-brāhmaṇas since in this case the qualifications for holding office would not have required considerable formal education.

There is little evidence to suggest an institutionalized means of recruitment to the bureaucracy. There was no examination system and no clearly formulated minimum qualifications. It would seem logical therefore to assume that but for senior officials appointments were made from amongst local persons. Such a system would not necessitate a complete change of officials at the local level each time there was a change of dynasty or an invasion. This would also partly account for the importance of the village councils, *pañca-kula*, etc., particularly in the post-Gupta period. The recruitment of senior officials may have been carried out in a more organized fashion. Evidence from the Mauryan period clearly indicates that such officers were liable to be transferred from one area to another and were in any case expected to tour frequently their own areas of administration.[46] The sheer physical necessity of transferring officers would have made it difficult to appoint local persons in their local capacity.

45. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, v. 136, 439; viii. 258.
46. Edict I. of Aśoka Maurya, Bloch, *Les Inscriptions d'Aśoka*, p. 139.

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In contrast to this the evidence from the Gupta period suggests a different situation. The range of the bureaucracy in terms of functionaries appears to have increased. More important, there is a marked tendency towards senior positions becoming hereditary. This becomes a regular feature in inscriptions relating to such families from the ninth century onwards in some of the central Indian kingdoms. It is possible to trace the descent of the office of minister from father to son in the Candella kingdom and to relate each minister with the contemporary king. The tendency for administrative office to become hereditary was doubtless associated with the fact that many senior officers were paid by the grant of revenue from a particular area or a grant of land. Revenue rights soon came to be regarded as land rights and in order to ensure continuity the office became hereditary. Brāhmaṇa names are not infrequent in such grants. Thus brāhmaṇa officials could become powerful through acquiring land rights.

Brāhmaṇa land holdings further increased during the Gupta and post-Gupta period through the institution of *brahmadeya* and *agrahāra* grants—the granting of tax-free land to a learned brāhmaṇa in perpetuity as a recognition of his learning or religious achievement. The idea of making such grants as donations to the brāhmaṇas is an early feature.[47] But charters referring to such grants do not occur in any significant number until about the fourth century A.D. In the Gupta period was created the office of the *agrahārika*, who presumably kept a record of such grants.[48] The post-Gupta period saw an increase in the number of inscriptions referring to *agrahāra* and *brahmadeya* grants. The acquisition of tax-free land, whether as an *agrahāra* or for services rendered to the king, brought with it the problems of property and ownership, if not those resulting from a closer and more real access to political power and that too in a period of low political stability. It is hardly surprising that laws of inheritance and ownership became far more complex during this period. A comparison of the relevant chapters in the *Manu Smṛti* with those

47. *Anuśāsana Parva*, ascribable to the first century A.D., has a whole chapter called *bhūmidāna-praśaṃsā*.

48. *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* (hereafter *CII*), iii, nos. 12 and 60.

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of Kātyāyana or the Mitākṣarā and Dāyabhāga systems provides abundant evidence of the complexities of changing concepts of property. It is likely that the increase in the number of brāhmaṇa families which had to attend to matters relating to their own property and sources of revenue sometimes extending over considerable areas and including one or more villages, or of those which had to administer the property of richly endowed temples, created vacancies at certain fairly senior levels in the bureaucracy which were occupied by the enterprising kāyasthas. The increase in the number of kingdoms, each requiring to be fully serviced with administrators in an age of conspicuous consumption and fierce competition, may also have led to the recruitment of the kāyasthas. The latter may have begun as routine scribes having picked up the bare essentials of a formal education and efficient administration, and entrenched themselves in the bureaucracy by working primarily in the sphere of revenue collection.

In determining the role of education as a means of social change a distinction must be made in the early period between oral education and formal education. In the early Vedic period, before the use of script, brahmanical education was an oral tradition. The contents of this tradition were religious or magical formulae and the rituals appropriate to various occasions. The memorizing of chronicles, dynastic histories or epic tales was the work of a different group of people, the *sūtas* and *māgadhas*. Even after much of the brāhmaṇical literature had been recorded in writing, the actual recitation of certain sacrosanct sections was kept secret and remained a part of oral learning. The element of magic was never totally eliminated from early religious literature; hence the injunction that a śūdra who dares to listen to the recitation of the Vedas must be severely punished.[49] The secret knowledge of the recitation of the Vedas gave magical powers to those brāhmaṇas who had acquired this knowledge, even in an era of literate civilization.

Formal education was theoretically available to members of the *dvija* castes. For a brāhmaṇa a knowledge of the Vedas was

49. *Vedānta Sūtra*, i. 3. 34-38; *Manu*, iii. 156; iv. 99.

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essential and this required many years of training and study. In addition, formal education would entail a familiarity with the śāstric tradition which included a study of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, logic, philosophy, astrology and the various śāstras, particularly the Dharmaśāstra. Not every brāhmaṇa however was conversant with the full range of these subjects. Some picked up a minimum knowledge of religious texts and rituals and earned their living as village priests. With the spread of Buddhism formal education was also imparted in Buddhist monasteries, but was often restricted to Buddhist monks. The brāhmaṇical centres, though technically open to all *dvija* castes, appear to have attracted mainly brāhmaṇa students. Those of kṣatriya status being largely members of royal families often had their own preceptor at court who would be a learned brāhmaṇa. It is hard to determine how many members of the vaiśya caste would have been interested in formal education, since most professional people would acquire professional skills through apprenticeship or working in the guilds. Buddhist monasteries technically had no caste restrictions. Members of the non-brāhmaṇa castes who were lay Buddhists may have acquired at least the rudiments of formal education in the monasteries which gradually became affluent from donations and endowments and could afford to maintain a large number of students. Hsüan Tsang's statement that the monastery at Nalanda fed and accommodated thousands of students may not be exaggerated in view of the lavish endowments made to the monastery.[50] But the majority of these students were monks; therefore the educational feed-back into society was limited.

The brāhmaṇical system of learning in the early period was not based on large institutions. More often than not students were attached to individual teachers, who, we are told, were supported by donations from the pupils. Although impoverished students were accepted and are referred to, it seems likely that well-to-do students would naturally have been preferred. This would coincide with the fact that only in sufficiently wealthy families would

50. Watters, op. cit., 165; cf. Takakusu, *A Record of Buddhist Religion* (Oxford, 1896), p. 154, for I-tsing's account in which he gives an estimate of over 3000 students.

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it be possible for the sons to have enough leisure to do justice to a brāhmaṇical formal education. The very nature of this education was such as to provide qualifications for those intending to become priests, rulers, bureaucrats and men of letters. For those going into less exalted professions, such an education would have been largely a luxury. The post-Gupta period shows a change in the process of brāhmaṇical education in that it is based on an institution and acquires a precise physical location—the temple and the *agrahāra*. In the Gupta period temples began to be built and quite soon became the physical nuclei of brāhmaṇical culture. The teaching of young pupils was frequently carried out in the temple precincts. The more richly endowed temples acquired centres of higher learning such as the *ghaṭikā*. In the process of institutionalizing education, as it were, it is possible that formal education was extended to more than just the brāhmaṇa pupils. This would have been more possible at the lower levels where affluent non-brāhmaṇas (provided they were not śūdras or worse) were accommodated. In the centres of higher learning the students appear to have been entirely brāhmaṇas.

The institutions of education served the needs of bureaucracy inasmuch as one can speak of bureaucracy as an organization in itself. In early India the definition of bureaucracy was by no means clear. Its social composition was varied, and it did not share an identity of culture amongst its upper and lower ranks. The identity of culture was much more with the social origins of each individual functionary. Mobility within the ranks of bureaucratic office was related to mobility within the wider context of society itself. Bureaucratic status became a means of obtaining social status for the kin-group; therefore upward mobility even when possible was probably slow. Acceleration of this process would occur during periods of political crisis and instability.

The organization of the army was of a similar order. Theoretically the high ranking officials should all have been of the kṣatriya caste, but this was by no means uniform in practice. The political importance of the army varied from period to period. Medieval Kashmir provides an example of mercenary

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officers of the royal bodyguard—the Tantrins and the Ekaṅgas—being the effective king-makers for a period of almost two hundred years.[51] Such a situation is not described as being in any way strange or peculiar. It may therefore have been more common during this period. How the royal bodyguard acquired such power is not clearly indicated, although it is hinted that the bodyguard was symbolic of a bigger political faction based on the *ḍāmaras* or land-owners. The ritual status of the Tantrins and the Ekaṅgas is not quite clear. They are not referred to as kṣatriyas, as one might expect them to be.

It would seem evident from what has been said so far that of the three *dvija* castes the brāhmaṇa is the most easily identifiable as a concrete social group. The kṣatriyas as the khattiyas of Buddhist literature had a distinct identity at the time of the Buddha, but later their actual identity becomes vague. The same is true of the last of the *dvija* castes, the vaiśyas. Although theoretically widely known, it is difficult to find groups which actually recognize themselves as vaiśyas. Nevertheless, there is a large range of castes and occupations which could be included within the theoretical functions of the vaiśya caste. According to the *śāstric* sources, the vaiśyas are those who tend cattle and cultivate land, are handicraftsmen, and also include merchants, and traders.[52] Presumably the reference to cultivation is to fairly wealthy cultivators, since the association of vaiśyas with wealth is a consistent association.[53] The vaiśyas are also described as being the group in society which provides the essential taxes.[54]

In considering the vaiśyas as part of the élite, the discussion will be confined to the more wealthy among the vaiśyas. In Buddhist sources the nearest identification of the affluent vaiśya would be with the *gahapati* (*gṛhapati*) or the householder whose wealth was derived from land or trade, in which case he was referred to as the *seṭṭhi-gahapati*. The affluent vaiśya group would also include the *jyeṣṭha* (head) of the *śreṇī* (guild). This category of the élite was essentially urban. Both their potential and

51. *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, v. 248; vi. 121.
52. *Manu*, ix. 326-33.
53. *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, v.
54. *Ait. Br.*, iii.

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actual power and status derived from the economy of the urban centres. With the growth and establishment of the towns, the *gahapati* became the focus of urban life in the second half of the first millennium B.C. Both the Buddhists and the brāhmaṇas competed for the patronage of the *gahapati*. Buddhist literature implies that much of the early support for Buddhism came from the khattiyas and the *gahapatis*.

The urban élite, therefore, although technically it could include brāhmaṇas, was composed in the early period at least of a large number of non-brāhmaṇas. Its chief concern appears to have been an attempt to maintain its own identity, status and power. This was done largely through the organization of guilds, which were fundamental to the economic well-being of this group. Members of the guilds do not seem to have competed in any significant way for political power. Recruitment to the guild was through family association, and there appears to have been little or no cross-recruitment from the guilds to the higher ranks of the bureaucracy; this was so in spite of the fact that during the Gupta period senior members of guilds were frequently associated with urban administration, and it would seem that these town councils had considerable autonomy. The transformation of guilds into castes with elaborate rules of endogamy must have tightened the intra-guild identity. Members of royal families are known to have invested their money in guilds.[55] Often the interest on such investments was endowed to religious institutions. The Buddhist Saṅgha also invested money in guilds and on occasion acted as a bank. It is possible that in the early history of certain guilds such as those of western India a sizable investment came from royal sources, in which case the guild would tend to remain subordinate to royal authority. Financiers would obviously benefit from royal backing. From the purely practical point of view the risks involved in the transportation of goods even within the sub-continent were such that it lay in the interests of the guilds to remain on the right side of authority. In the latter half of our period it was gradually and implicitly

55. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization* (University of Calcutta, 1965), nos. 85, 86.

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recognized that access to political power had to be based on property in land and could not be achieved through commercial wealth alone; furthermore, that the amount of land necessary for the purpose could not be purchased. Grants of lands, as we have seen, were generally made to learned brāhmaṇas and able administrators; the category of the prosperous trader is rarely mentioned. It is hard to believe however that kings in times of economic pressure would not have willingly granted land to a wealthy financier in return for a large sum of ready money—unless of course the supply of available currency was inadequate to cover the cost of granting land, as may have been the case in the post-Gupta period when there appears to have been a decline in the use of coins.

In most periods of early India and in most areas a clear distinction was maintained between land and trade as sources of income, and land was regarded as superior. Revenue from land was invested in trade by the *gahapatis*, various royal families and the Buddhist Saṅgha. The recipients of land grants in the later period tended to be more cautious. There was however a striking exception to this. During the Cola period the more wealthy brāhmaṇas, many of whom were the beneficiaries of substantial *brahmadeya* grants, began investing their own money in trade or else became partners in financial guilds. The identity of landed wealth with commerce must have considerably strengthened the position of the brāhmaṇas. Generally investment in land as a source of capital on the part of affluent merchants was not unknown, although infrequent. However, those who built their wealth through commerce rarely seemed to have acquired land in order to use it as a base for political power. Perhaps the socio-economic organization of the commercial structure did not encourage this.

The hierarchy and ranking of various social groups included within the wider bracket of vaiśya appears to have been somewhat fluid. One of the more important inscriptions of the Gupta period records the building of a *Sūrya* (Sun) temple the finances for which came from a guild of silk-weavers of western India.[56]

56. Mandasor Inscription, *CII*, iii, no. 18.

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The inscription records that when the guild could no longer maintain itself through silk-weaving, its members moved to another part of western India and took up a variety of other professions and some became archers, soldiers, bards and scholars. This is a clear case of mobility occurring through change of habitation, geographical location and occupation of the entire group. What is puzzling however is: how did an erstwhile weaver —low in caste ranking—become a scholar? This can only be explained by suggesting that if the actual status was sufficiently high (and the silk-weavers in this case were obviously wealthy enough to build a temple to the Sun) then it could provide access to professions which theoretically were barred. Not surprisingly, when Alberuni refers to the varṇa theory of social structure in India, he says that he finds it very difficult to distinguish in fact between vaiśyas and śūdras.[57]

From the broad group of the vaiśyas some of the religious movements, which had an element of social protest, tended to draw their biggest support. The association of Buddhism with the *gahapatis* was not entirely accidental. The close association of Buddhism and Jainism with the period of an increase in population and trade has been commented upon,[58] as indeed also the fact that the literature of these traditions has primarily an urban setting and emanates from the republican sources. An equally obvious case is that of certain sections of the *bhakti* teachers such as the Ālvārs and Nāyanārs of Tamil Nadu. They frequently belonged to urban and artisan groups who objected to both brāhmaṇical rituals and the iniquities of caste ranking. The creation of new religious groups disowning identification with any caste or adherence to caste rules produced a temporary sense of mobility. Over a period of time the new religious group either grew extensively in numbers, as was the case with the Buddhists, and had to accept the socio-economic functioning of the caste society; or else the subscribers to the new religious movement became a separate caste and had to be located in the order of ranking. During the

57. Sachau, op. cit., p. 101.

58. D. D. Kosambi, "Ancient Kosala and Magadha", JBBRAS. xxvii (1952), 180-213.

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latter process by imitating some of the norms of the higher castes, these could acquire a higher status than was their due on considerations of birth alone. The process of improving status by as it were "jumping the line" and working through a non-caste religious movement appears to have been an avenue of mobility. Judging by their literature, those religious movements which had a stronger element of social awareness initially drew a larger support from urban areas. Thus the possibilities of mobility in the early phases of such movements would be largely among urban groups. If the new cult acquired the right kind of patronage as well, it was soon incorporated into the "Great Tradition" of Hinduism, as happened with the Tamil devotional cult during the Pallava period and with certain aspects of the tantric cult. But the incorporation of a cult was not merely because of royal or influential patronage or the desire on the part of the brāhmaṇical tradition to assimilate popular movements. Cults essentially associated with particular social groups would have to be incorporated into the "Great Tradition" when those groups had moved into the higher ritual status categories of the varṇa system. The validation of kṣatriya status in the post-Gupta period also meant the validation of a variety of religious cults. The cult of a particular deity could either be incorporated *in toto* or else an attempt was made to associate the cult deity with the existing range of the Sanskritic pantheon, which was also the more common method.

Another crucial factor contributing to the continuance of the caste structure was the nature of the organization of economic activities, and the service relationships involved in these activities. Unfortunately information on the working of these relationships at the village level is meagre. But what seems obvious from the references is that a system similar to that of *jajmānī* was in vogue. Artisans in the village such as the potter, blacksmith, carpenter, barber and weaver[59] were paid a share of the grain. This system is also suggested as payment for more formal service relationships.[60] In the urban areas also where

59. *Pāṇini*, i. 1.48; *Mahābhāṣya*, i. 118.
60. *Arthaśāstra*, v. 2.

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monetary economy was the usual norm the system of service relationships was quite extensive. A careful distinction is maintained in the *Arthaśāstra* between revenue from the rural areas and that from urban sources, and keeping a careful record of the latter in the form of required services is suggested.[61] As regards the relationship between artisans and the state, it is indicated that they were required to put in a specified amount of free labour even at a later period.[62] This is corroborated by Megasthenes. Artisans provided free services for a specified time, usually one day a month.[63] Such a system would not only reduce mobility but also ensure the preservation of existing service relationships. That the *śreṇī* in the town tended to become a caste emerging out of a professional group is not surprising.

The organization of service relationships in the towns is fairly clear. The distribution of work was not only organized in terms of the professions living in the town but also in terms of the physical occupation by different professions of different parts of the town.[64] Each *śreṇī* had its own professional code, working arrangements, duties and obligations and even religious observances.[65] Matters relating to wider areas of dispute were sometimes settled by *śreṇīs* among themselves.[66] Social mobility among such groups, where an entire group would seek to change its ritual status on the basis of an improvement of actual status, would be more frequent, since the economic opportunities for improving actual status would be more easily available, particularly in periods of expanding trade. It is not coincidental that the greatest activity of heterodox sects and of religious movements associated with social protest was in periods of expanding trade.

The study of the social structure in early India involves primarily a consideration of the factors which led to the evo-

61. Ibid. ii. 6.15, 35.
62. *Manu*, viii. 138; *Viṣṇu*, iii. 32; *Gautama*, x. 31-32.
63. *Gautama*, x. 31.
64. *Jātakas*, i. 320; iv. 81; v. 13; vi. 276; *Arthaśāstra*, ii. 4.
65. *Nārada*, x. 2-3; *Gautama*, xi. 21.
66. *Bṛhaspati*, i. 28; *Yājñavalkya*, ii. 30; *Maj. N.*, 41.

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lution of a caste society—the idea of ritual pollution, the preservation of kinship systems involving rules of endogamy and exogamy, the conflict between tribal systems and village economies and the nature of service relationships. Ritual pollution expressed itself most readily in food taboos and the laws of commensality, and was extended to include the concept of physical contact. It was partly because of this that laws of endogamy and exogamy had to be strictly maintained in the unfolding of kinship relationships. The conflict between tribal systems and village economies is expressed not only in the concept of the varṇas themselves where some derive from tribal origins and some from professional groups, but also in the preservation of regional names and identities in various castes. The nature of service relationships was the socio-economic matrix which ensured the continuity of the system. The triumph of the village economy over the tribal system ensured the success of the caste structure. The grant of land to the brāhmaṇas was not for the acquisition of religious merit alone, for the establishment of brāhmaṇical nuclei particularly in the new areas meant the acculturation of such areas to the Sanskritic mould. The theoretical model of the varṇa system could not be rigidly enforced in practice since it would require a static society for proper functioning. The distinction between ritual status—the fixed status, and actual status—the mobile status, may have been the ingenious solution to an otherwise insurmountable problem.

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Studies in the Social Structure of the Early Tamils

SUVIRA JAISWAL

Beginnings in the study of south Indian social structure were made by the Christian missionaries, who came in the wake of the European conquest of south India. In course of their proselytizing activities some of them realized that in order to succeed in their mission they must win the confidence of the local people, learn their language and acquire some idea of their beliefs and customs. One of these was Costanzio Beschi[1] (1680-1747), an Italian Jesuit missionary, whose pioneering studies in Tamil grammar and literature did much to promote interest in Tamil language and culture among European scholars. A little later, a French missionary Abbe Dubois, who spent thirty years of his life in the various parts of south India, wrote a vivid, if not entirely unprejudiced, account of the customs and caste divisions of the Hindus of the peninsula. He felt convinced of the high antiquity and independent character of the Hindu civilization, but as he was unaware of the progress being made in Europe in philology, ethnology and comparative religion, he could only make a few conjectures in the light of his Biblical knowledge. Noting certain resemblances between the Jews and the brāhmaṇas regarding notions of ritual purity, he concluded that the brāhmaṇas were the descendants of Japheth, one of the sons of Noah, and that they came to India from the north, from the neighbourhood of the Caucasus.

1. Thomas Srinivasan, "Beschi, the Tamil Scholar and Poet", *Tamil Culture*, iii (1954), 297-313.

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The influence of the Biblical myth may be traced in the writings of later missionaries,[2] some of whom have made profound contributions to Dravidian studies. Bishop Caldwell, who published his monumental work on Dravidian philology in 1856, affirmed the view[3] that Central Asia was the seed-plot of nations where the ancestors of Aryans and Dravidians, speaking one language, lived together long before the commencement of history; but the linguistic researches led him to conclude that the Dravidian languages were derived from some independent, non-Indo-European source. He firmly demolished the traditional explanation given by the Sanskrit pandits and accepted by earlier European scholars such as Colebrooke, Carey and Wilkins that the languages of south India, like those of north India, were merely dialects of Sanskrit with an admixture of some foreign elements; and he ascribed a "Scythian" origin to them.

Caldwell identified language with race. His views were similar to those of contemporary German comparative philologists, who maintained that the speakers of Indo-European languages in India, Persia and Europe were descendants of the Aryan tribe which lived north of the Hindukush and dispersed after 2000 B.C. to the south and west to "conquer and colonise".[4] Since Sanskrit, the language of the Aryans, was cultivated by the brāhmaṇas in the south he inferred that they were of Aryan race and Sanskrit was their mother-tongue. The obvious exception of the Brahuis, who speak a Dravidian language but are physically very different from the supposed Dravidian type, did not occur to him, for in his opinion the Brahui contained but a small proportion of Dravidian words and did not belong to the Dravidian family.[5] He also put forward a sociological argument that although the northern lawgivers described the entire mass of Dravidian popula-

2. In recent times Rev. H. Heras has made an enthusiastic effort to prove that the Aryans were the descendants of Japheth and the Dravidians of Ham, *Proto-Indo-Mediterranean Culture*, i (Bombay, 1953), 440f.

3. Joan Leopold, 'The Aryan Theory of Race in India, 1876-1920; Nationalist and Internationalist Visions", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vii, no. 2 (June 1970), 271f.

4. *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* (Reprint, Madras, 1961), pp. xi, 67.

5. Ibid. p. 39.

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tion as degraded kṣatriyas, in the south, with the exception of a few royal families, the Dravidians were never given a higher title than that of śūdra; the virtual absence of kṣatriyas and vaiśyas, the two middle varṇas, was apparently due to the fact that none but an Aryan could be a *dvija*. The Aryan emigration to the south consisted of the peaceful brāhmaṇa priests and instructors and not of kṣatriya warriors or vaiśya traders.

Caldwell's unreserved identification of the south Indian brāhmaṇas with the Indo-European element in the racial complex of the south appears to have been partially based on his belief in the "higher mental gifts and higher capacity for civilization" of the Indo-European tribes.[6] Curiously his conclusions were substantially endorsed at the turn of the present century by the findings of Herbert Risley, the eminent ethnologist, who was fully aware of the danger of correlating language with race.[7] Risley contended on the basis of anthropometry that caste was chiefly a matter of race, the social ranking of the members of a caste corresponding in inverse ratio to the average width of their noses. On this ground brāhmaṇas stood at the top of hierarchy, and he quoted Fawcett to the effect that the physical features of the Nambudiri brāhmaṇas in Malabar showed that they were "the truest Aryans in southern India".[8] It has been suggested that the racial tensions and prejudices of the western world influenced the approach of Risley and other European scholars and led them to unduly exaggerate the role of race in the formation of caste.[9] Later researches have shown the fallacy of Risley's methods and assumptions, and it is remarked[10] that the results of anthropometric tests are vague and unreliable and there is hardly any Indian caste having a uniform physical type. W. Crooke in his learned Introduction to Risley's book laid stress on the views of Ridgeway regarding the influence of environment in modifying body-structure and referred to the work of Thurston to

6. Ibid. p. 69.
7. *The People of India* (London, 1915), p. 7f.
8. Ibid. p. 90.
9. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon* (Oxford, 1962), p. 105.
10. D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956), p. 107.

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prove that Risley's Dravidian type exhibits a considerable variety of physical forms. Thurston was convinced of a free racial mixture even in the brāhmaṇa caste in the south, as is indicated by the high nasal index of many groups of the brāhmaṇa community.[11] E. A. Gait also criticized Risley's conclusions although he thought that in the south "the infusion of Aryan and other foreign blood is much weaker and there is far greater racial uniformity".[12] Opinions diverged even with regard to the so-called Dravidian features. According to Risley the Dravidian type nose was thick and broad, but Haeckel defined it as "narrow and prominent".[13] Such generalizations are hardly of any help in unfolding the ethnic affinities of a caste, and responsible opinion now does not concede any sharp ethnological division between the speakers of the Dravidian languages and those of the Indo-Aryan ones.[14] According to one view the brāhmaṇas of each of the linguistic areas have greater physical affinity with other castes of their region than with the brāhmaṇas of other areas.[15]

However, the facile equation of the Aryan "race" with the brāhmaṇa caste and of the expansion of Sanskrit with "Northern Imperialism" was readily accepted by the newly growing non-brāhmaṇa intelligentsia in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Nilakanta Sastri states[16] that the opposition to Arvan influences and brāhmaṇism goes back to medieval times in south India. Social rivalry existed even prior to British rule, for brāhmaṇas had enjoyed a virtual monopoly of all the important posts and positions in the traditional power structure. Owing to their strategic position in society they were the first to realize the advantages of the new educational system and to reap its benefits in terms of better jobs and preponderance in the civil service. The development accentuated resentment to-

11. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, i (Madras, 1909), liv-lv.
12. *Census of India* (1911), i, pt. i, Reports (Calcutta, 1913), 382.
13. Thurston, op. cit., p. 1.
14. A. L. Basham, "Some Reflections on Dravidians and Aryans", *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures* (Madras, 1963), pt. ii, 225f.
15. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India* (3rd edn., 1957), p. 124t.
16. *Cultural Contacts Between Aryans and Dravidians* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 65-66.

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prove that Risley's Dravidian type exhibits a considerable variety of physical forms. Thurston was convinced of a free racial mixture even in the brāhmaṇa caste in the south, as is indicated by the high nasal index of many groups of the brāhmaṇa community.[11] E. A. Gait also criticized Risley's conclusions although he thought that in the south "the infusion of Aryan and other foreign blood is much weaker and there is far greater racial uniformity".[12] Opinions diverged even with regard to the so-called Dravidian features. According to Risley the Dravidian type nose was thick and broad, but Haeckel defined it as "narrow and prominent".[13] Such generalizations are hardly of any help in unfolding the ethnic affinities of a caste, and responsible opinion now does not concede any sharp ethnological division between the speakers of the Dravidian languages and those of the Indo-Aryan ones.[14] According to one view the brāhmaṇas of each of the linguistic areas have greater physical affinity with other castes of their region than with the brāhmaṇas of other areas.[15]

However, the facile equation of the Aryan "race" with the brāhmaṇa caste and of the expansion of Sanskrit with "Northern Imperialism" was readily accepted by the newly growing non-brāhmaṇa intelligentsia in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Nilakanta Sastri states[16] that the opposition to Arvan influences and brāhmaṇism goes back to medieval times in south India. Social rivalry existed even prior to British rule, for brāhmaṇas had enjoyed a virtual monopoly of all the important posts and positions in the traditional power structure. Owing to their strategic position in society they were the first to realize the advantages of the new educational system and to reap its benefits in terms of better jobs and preponderance in the civil service. The development accentuated resentment to-

11. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, i (Madras, 1909), liv-lv.
12. *Census of India* (1911), i, pt. i, Reports (Calcutta, 1913), 382.
13. Thurston, op. cit., p. 1.
14. A. L. Basham, "Some Reflections on Dravidians and Aryans", *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures* (Madras, 1963), pt. ii, 225f.
15. Ghurye, *Caste and Class in India* (3rd edn., 1957), p. 124t.
16. *Cultural Contacts Between Aryans and Dravidians* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 65-66.

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wards the brāhmaṇas among the non-brāhmaṇas, particularly among those non-brahmaṇa landholding caste-Hindus who ranked just below the brāhmaṇas. This class challenged the pre-eminence of the brāhmaṇas and articulated the sense of injustice it felt. This feeling became still more acute when the non-brāhmaṇas began to receive western education and compete with the brāhmaṇas for white-collar jobs. It was deliberately fostered by the British administrators, who used it to stifle the growing discontent consequent on political awakening. In 1886 Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant-Duff, the Governor of Madras, went out of the way to incite the non-brāhmaṇas in his address to the graduates of the University of Madras. He remarked :

> You are pure Dravidian race .... you have less to do with Sanskrit than we English have. Ruffianly Europeans have sometimes been known to speak of natives of India as 'Niggers', but they did not, like the proud speakers or writers of Sanskrit, speak of the people of the South as legions of monkeys. It was these Sanskrit speakers, not Europeans, who lumped up the Southern races as Rakshusas—demons. It was they who deliberately grounded all social distinctions on Varna, Colour.[17]

The British administrator-historian of south India J. H. Nelson also spoke[18] of the superiority of the non-brāhmaṇas because of their rich cultural heritage. These provocations and stimulants led the non-brāhmaṇa scholars to blame the brāhmaṇas for introducing a social organization based on gross injustice, and sought to glorify the achievements of the Tamils before and at the time of their first contact with the Aryans. A strong feeling of "Dravidian Nationalism" was generated, and valuable work was done under this stimulus. Ancient Tamil texts were resurrected from oblivion, and keen interest was aroused in the study of Tamil language and culture. In his work entitled *Milestones in the History of Tamil Literature,* P. Sundaram Pillai (1855-97), a non-brāhmaṇa of Trivandrum, emphasized

17. Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India* (Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 281.
18. Ibid. pp. 282-83.

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the antiquity and independent character of the Dravidian civilization, and condemned the *Rāmāyaṇa* as a biased literary composition designed to extol the Aryans and paint the Dravidians "in the worst possible colour".[19] But the first major attempt to write the social history of the early Tamils was made by V. Kanakasabhai, who contributed some articles to the *Madras Review* between the years 1895 and 1901. Three years later these were published in the form of his well-known book *Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago*.

Kanakasabhai gave a very vivid, succinct and masterly account of the Tamils in the Śaṅgam age, and, although at places he showed strange reliance on fantastic tales,[20] his views were accepted as authoritative by such eminent scholars as V. A. Smith, L. D. Barnett and R. C. Majumdar. It is a measure of his keen historical insight that, unlike several subsequent Tamil historians who zealously pushed back the Śaṅgam literature to Maurya times, he ascribed it to the early centuries of the Christian era, a view which has now won general consensus. Before the discovery of the Śaṅgam literature, Burnell and Caldwell had stated that there was no Tamil literature before the ninth century A.D. Referring to them Kanakasabhai categorically said that "all that was original and excellent in the literature of the Tamils" was written long before the ninth century, before Sanskrit gained ascendancy. What followed was "but a base imitation or translation of Sanskrit works". The first century of the Christian era was the Augustan period of Tamil literature, whereas the Sanskrit literature of this period was "a perfect blank". It was a matter of considerable pride to him that in the first century A.D. when the "Aryan races" in India were undergoing a "period of humiliation", and brāhmaṇism "one of painful struggle for existence", Tamil races were thriving in the south and producing a rich culture.[21] Kanakasabhai emphasized that the Tamil culture developed entirely independently of the north. The Tamils had attained a high degree of civilization before the advent of the Aryans, and "the pure Tamil language is so copious

19. Quoted by E. F. Irschick, Ibid. p. 283.
20. *Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* (Madras, 1956), pp. 2-3.
21. Ibid. p. 52.

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and exact that it can do well without borrowing Sanskrit words". He further wrote :

> In the ancient Tamil classical works, the terms relating to Music, Grammar, Astronomy and even abstract Philosophy are of pure Tamil origin; and they indicate most clearly that those sciences were cultivated by the Tamils long before the arrival of the Brahmins or other Aryan immigrants.[22]

Thus Kanakasabhai regards the brāhmaṇas as Aryan immigrants who entered Tamilaham about the sixth or fifth century B.C., and he holds them responsible for making a conscious attempt "to foist their system on the Tamils". He points out[23] that *Tolkāppiyam*, a Tamil grammar written by a brāhmaṇa some time in the early centuries of the Christian era, represents the first attempt to bring the Tamils under the brāhmaṇical caste system. It assigns the highest status to the brāhmaṇas (*andaṇar*) who wear the sacred thread, describes the kings (*araśar*) as belonging to the second and the merchants to the third caste, but in place of the śūdras it mentions the Veḷḷalas who are said to have had no other occupation than the cultivation of the soil. Here Kanakasabhai clearly sees a brāhmaṇical effort to separate the Veḷḷala kings from ordinary Veḷḷalas who were by implication to be degraded to the ranks of the śūdras. But the attempt, he adds, could not succeed completely, and to this day the Veḷḷala does not take meals touched by the so-called kṣatriya Padaiyachi or by a merchant who claims to be a vaiśya. Kanakasabhai praises the British government for providing "the best possible codes of law which are administered without distinction of caste or creed" and exhorts the Tamils to give up the caste system and the harmful philosophy of inaction taught by the *Bhagavadgītā*.[24] His observations exercised a great influence upon the writings of later scholars such as V. A. Smith and L. D. Barnett, and K. N. Sivaraja Pillai in his *Chronology of the Early Tamils* (1932) repeated the charge against Tolkāp-

22. Ibid. p. 116.
23. Ibid. pp. 238-39.
24. *Cambridge History of India*, i (1922), 594.

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piyar.[25] Similar views were expressed by K. P. Padmanabha Menon in his *History of Kerala*.[26]

As a result of these pioneering studies in the fields of history, linguistics and ethnology, it was gradually realized that in the initial task of the reconstruction of Indian history too much prominence had been given to the north and Indo-Aryan elements. Vincent Smith drew attention to the views of Sundaram Pillai that the bulk of the people in peninsular India still distinctly retained "their pre-Aryan features, their pre-Aryan languages, their pre-Aryan social institutions". He remarked: "Attention has been concentrated too long on the North, on Sanskrit books, and on Indo-Aryan notions. It is time that due regard should be paid to the non-Aryan element".[27] In 1916 F. J. Richards, a member of the Indian Civil Service, exhorted the south Indians to emphasize the contribution of the Dravidians to the history of India and that of the world.[28] Irschick has shown[29] that the British administrative and commercial interests were hostile to the brāhmaṇas and encouraged a popular anti-brāhmaṇa movement; we may add that the stress on Dravidian superiority and the contribution of the Dravidians to Indian culture found in the writings of distinguished British scholars provided a large sop to Dravidian nationalists. In his *Agastya in the Tamil Land*,[30] K. N. Sivaraja Pillai claimed to have made an attempt to carry out the wishes of Vincent Smith by providing "independent non-Aryan testimony" to the Agastya legend, and he dismissed it as a pure and simple myth fabricated by the brāhmaṇas at a time when the Tamilians had fallen into decadence.[31] Sivaraja Pillai objected to the use of the word "Aryanization" in the context of Dravidian India. According to him it was an "unfair" term,

25. Quoted by N. Subrahmanian, *Saṅgam Polity* (Madras, 1966), p. 260.

26. i (Ernākulam, 1924), 56f.

27. Smith, *The Early History of India* (Oxford, Reprint, 1957), p. 9.

28. "Side Lights on the Dravidian Problem", *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, vi, 156-201.

29. *Op. cit.*; also see M. N. Srinivas, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1952), pp. 158-59.

30. Date not given, but published before 1917.

31. Ibid. pp. 26-32.

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which ignored the substantial contributions of the Dravidians to the present-day south Indian civilization.[32] In 1927 M. S. Purnalingam Pillai published a small booklet, *Tamil India*,[33] which emphasized the hoary antiquity of the Tamil culture, Tamilaham being the cradle of human civilization, and he tried to give an idea of the social life of the Tamils in their "golden age". But his account is very haphazard, and beyond making such generalized statements as—Tamils were at first a homogeneous community—untouchability, unapproachability and unshadowability were unknown to them—marriage to them was a matter of self-choice—it makes no addition to our knowledge. Purnalingam Pillai did much for the development and popularization of Tamil literature, but he held a strong bias against the brāhmaṇas and accused the Aryans or brāhmaṇas of corrupting the Śaiva Siddhānta system, "the choicest product of the Tamilian intellect".[34]

In 1924 appeared *The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture* written by Gilbert Slater, a distinguished British economic historian, whose main interest was the Industrial Revolution. However, during his short stay in south India he seems to have familiarized himself with the special problems of the region, as is shown by his less known work, *Southern India : Its Political and Economic Problems* (1936). In *The Dravidian Element in Indian Culture* he tried to prove the superiority of Dravidian culture over the Aryan in architecture and city life. He maintained that the caste system was pre-Aryan and it developed among the Dravidians; the brāhmaṇa caste evolved out of the Dravidian priest-magicians, who had originally come from Egypt bringing the elements of heliolithic culture with them. When the Aryans invaded India and established their dominance on the basis of superior military prowess, the brāhmaṇas learnt the language of the new masters and began to function as their priests. In course of time they succeeded in imposing their own superior culture upon the barbaric Aryans and became their leaders.

32. Ibid. p. 7.

33. Reprinted by South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, Madras, 1963.

34. *Tamil Literature* (Munnirapallam, 1929), p. 254.

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Slater's book enjoyed much influence and is frequently quoted by later writers.

A little earlier in 1913 H. R. Hall[35] had suggested that the Sumerians were perhaps a branch of the Dravidians who developed their civilization on the banks of the Indus. When in 1923 remnants of a pre-Aryan culture of great antiquity were discovered in the Indus valley, Hall's suggestions appeared to have received full confirmation. Sir John Marshall in his monumental report *Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilisation* remarked[36] that Hall's theory regarding the racial identity of the Dravidians and the Sumerians rested on a "very insecure basis", the physical type of the Sumerian being as uncertain as that of the Dravidian. He described the attempt to identify as Dravidian the skulls classed as Proto-Australoid or those classed as Mediterranean as rather "rash". But he firmly established the non-Aryan character of the civilization and drew pointed attention to the continuance of the traditions of the Indus valley in the religious and cultural milieu of the people of the south. It is to be admitted[37] that recent researches tend to support the proto-Dravidian character of the Harappa culture, although it is far from established. Yet the discovery stimulated much interest among the historians of south India and in a learned publication a contributor expressed the view[38] that it was a mistake to say that south India was Aryanized; the thrilling discoveries of Harappa and Mohenjo-daro suggest that the process was just the reverse and should be described as "Indianization of the Aryans". Some scholars went further. T. K. Krishna Menon, giving a university extension lecture at the Maharaja College, Ernakulam, categorically stated that prior to the arrival of the Aryans the Indus valley was inhabited by the Dravidians and, though in historic times they are confined to peninsular India, in ancient days they inhabited

35. *The Ancient History of the Near East* (London, 1913), p. 173f.

36. i (London, 1931), 109-10.

37. Romila Thapar, Presidential Address for Section I, *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 31st Session (Varanasi, 1969), pp. 16, 26; K. K. Pillay, Presidential Address delivered at the 32nd Session of the Indian History Congress held at Jabalpur, p. 9f.

38. Professor Ferrand E. Corley of Christian College, Madras, in *S. K. Aiyangar Commemoration Volume* (Madras, 1936), p. 157.

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not only northern India but also the far-off regions of South-East Asia, Egypt and Central America; the ancient civilization of the Mayas and Incas were closely connected with the Dravidians.[39] Even the Chinese civilization owed much to the Dravidians, it was claimed.[40]

It is interesting to note that most of these non-brāhmaṇa scholars belonged to the socially superior landowning castes of the Veḷḷalas and Nāyars, who were highly respected in the Tamil and Kerala regions respectively. In the brāhmaṇa vocabulary they were all loosely described as "śūdras" and designated as such in the early Census Reports,[41] but in their view this categorization had no basis in history. Kanakasabhai, to whose views we have referred earlier, thought that the Dravidians were outside the varṇa system. T. K. Krishna Menon, on the other hand, made a spirited attempt to prove that the Nāyars were originally classed as kṣatriyas. He gave to the people of Kerala, especially the Nāyars, the main credit for diffusing the Dravidian culture throughout the ancient world.

But pride in Dravidian achievements was not confined to non-brāhmaṇas alone. Paradoxically, the intensification of the national struggle for independence, which brought together people from all over India, also led to a realization of the marked cultural differences between the various regions of the country and a sense of affinity among the different sections of the people of each region. South Indian brāhmaṇas were not prepared to accept at its face value the contention that they constituted a "foreign element" in an overwhelmingly Dravidian population. Criticizing Risley, P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar wrote in 1912 that the distinction between the Aryans and their Dasyu predecessors was one of cult and not of race,[42] and he ridiculed those "who seem to hold it as a necessary axiom that the fertile lands of India... pre-eminently fitted to nurture men... should yet

39. These were later published in the form of a booklet entitled *The Dravidian Culture and Its Diffusion* (Ernakulam, 1937), p. 26.
40. Ibid. p. 44.
41. Thurston, op. cit., vii, 373.
42. *Life in Ancient India in the Age of the Mantras* (Madras, 1912), p. 9f.

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depend on importations from the arid countries beyond her borders".[43] Similar sentiments were expressed by T. R. Sesha Iyengar and V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar. Sesha Iyengar[44] did not refute the theory of Aryan invasion but accepted the views of Slater on the Dravidian origin of the brāhmaṇas, tracing the antiquity of the Dravidians in south India to "post-diluvian" times. The dichotomy of north and south and Aryan and Dravidian is very pronounced in his work, and he contrasts the two cultures at every step, often to emphasize the great achievements of the latter civilization. Dikshitar,[45] however, had a greater understanding of the implications of the problem of the Aryan and Dravidian, and he firmly stated that the theory of the racial dichotomy between the two was a big myth. Ethnically the Aryans and Dravidians were one, but their cultures were different due to the environment in which they were placed. He rejected all talk of immigration either of the Aryans or the Dravidians, maintaining that the terms carried only geographical and linguistic connotations. He postulated that the original home of the Dravidians was peninsular India, which formed a part of the now submerged Lemuria continent linking south India with Africa when the Indo-Gangetic basin was not yet formed. "The theory of the Pre-Dravidian and Proto-Dravidian is a myth of the 20th century", he declared.

Thus the problems of origin and antiquity were the main obsessions of the Tamil historians in the pre-Independence period. The desire of the Tamil historians to deny all traces of "foreign" origin and influences and to claim a very high antiquity and a glorious past of their civilization was obviously a reaction to the humiliation of long foreign subjection. But the revivalist tendency clouded historical judgement, and a great deal of blind and uncritical reliance was placed on epic myths and Purāṇic stories for the reconstruction of the history of the south. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar's *History of the Tamils* suffers heavily from such defects. Even where archaeological evidence was taken into account, it was often misunderstood or distorted beyond credence.

43. *History of the Tamils* (Madras, 1929).
44. *Dravidian India*, i (Madras, 1925), 56, 129.
45. *Origin and Spread of the Early Tamils* (Madras, 1947).

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From the fact that south India did not have a copper or bronze age, the neolithic layers being directly overlaid by an iron culture, Dikshitar arrived at the astounding conclusion that the iron age in the south must be dated earlier than the fourth millennium B.C.[46] Later, he revised this view in favour of greater antiquity. In his Sir William Meyer Lectures delivered at the Madras University in January 1951 he stated that the iron industry in south India was older than that of Europe and dates from 10000 B.C. to 8000 B.C.[47]

Along with the tendency of stressing identification with the regional culture and proclaiming its achievements, the Tamil brāhmaṇas also sought to emphasize the role of the Aryans, brāhmaṇas or Sanskrit in the development of the Tamil culture to counteract the non-brāhmaṇa criticism that the brāhmaṇas had corrupted the "pure" Dravidian culture. Thus Dikshitar pointed out that Sanskrit culture did not seek to undermine the distinct features of Tamil culture but "to stimulate and elevate it to nobler achievements in the realms especially of arts, crafts and letters".[48] However, as he regarded south India as a unit by itself from the geological to historical times he thought that the Dravidian languages, particularly Tamil, developed independently of Sanskrit.[49] Not everyone agreed with this view. M. Srinivasa Aiyangar emphatically asserted that even the earliest Tamil literature showed influence of Sanskrit : "... the earliest grammarians of Tamil were Brahmans, and their first teachers of philosophy were also Brāhmans",[50] he wrote. Another writer remarked :

> ....the Cholas traced their descent from Śibi, the great apostle of unselfishness who ruled in North India, the Pāṇḍyas claimed descent from the Pāṇḍavas, and the Cheras from Yadu. Thus, the Tamilians were, practically,

46. Ibid. p. 19.

47. The lectures were later published by the University of Madras under the title *Pre-historic South India* (1951). See p. 249f.

48. *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*, first published in 1930 (Reprint, Madras, 1936), p. 308.

49. *Pre-historic South India*, p. 248.

50. *Tamil Studies; or, Essays on the History of the Tamil People, Language, Religion and Literature* (Madras, 1914), p. 42f.

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only "southern Aryans", and they called one another, as they do even today, "ayya" or "Arya" in its Tamil form.[51]

Nevertheless, the anti-brāhmaṇa movement continued to gather momentum first from the platform of the Justice Party, which aimed at removing social injustice perpetrated by the brāhmaṇical system with the active support of the British government, and later from 1944 onwards through Dravida Kazhagam and its offshoot the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. The Dravida Kazhagam was more in tune with the growing freedom movement throughout India, but it was also a more ardent opponent of the brāhmaṇa power and did much to intensify the anti-brāhmaṇa feelings. It denounced religion as a tool of the brāhmaṇas to keep the masses under their control and rejected the entire Sanskrit tradition, deities, rituals and caste observances. It tried to weld all the non-brāhmaṇas into a distinct cultural entity distinguishing them from the Aryaṇ brāhmaṇa. The Dravida Kazhagam ideology deeply attracted the non-brāhmaṇa élite, and has almost become an article of faith with many modern writers, who fail to perceive that the complex system of castes could not have been imposed by "outsiders" unless deeper and more basic socio-economic factors had already prepared the ground for such a metamorphosis. But few have bothered to work out the details or provide evidence for the process of change, which is commonly and enthusiastically assumed by these ideologues. Thus a recently published work[52] meant for university students and general readers repeats the views of Caldwell and Kanakasabhai that the Aryan emigration to the south consisted mostly of brāhmaṇa priests and instructors. The brāhmaṇas persuaded the Dravidian rulers to perform Vedic sacrifices for their own long life and prosperity and won over rich Dravidian merchants by throwing open the trade routes and commercial centres of north India. Having brought the

51. A. S. Panchapakesa Ayyar, *The Story of Manimekalai* (Vellore, 1948), p. vi.

52. Alappat Sreedhara Menon, *A Survey of Kerala History* (Kottayam, 1967), p. 96f. Menon served as a member of the staff of the History and Politics Department of the University College, Trivandrum, for several years, and is now working as the editor of the *Kerala Gazetteers*.

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princely and merchant classes under their sphere of influence, they made them believe that they constituted the two superior castes of kṣatriyas and vaiśyas. Eventually these Dravidians began to look down upon their kinsmen following other occupations. In this way the toiling classes which were held in high esteem in the Saṅgam age came to be regarded as low castes, and the brāhmaṇas impressed upon them that the higher classes deserved their allegiance. The writer holds the brāhmaṇas responsible for reducing the ancient Pana community to the status of the Kizhor, the Harijans. According to this view the whole complex of caste organization resulted from the clever machinations of the brāhmaṇas. In our opinion this simplistic explanation would hardly be acceptable to any well informed student of social history. It does not explain why if the pre-Aryan Dravidian society was based on principles of equality and homogeneity and had already attained a high degree of cultural level, the brāhmaṇas succeeded so easily and completely in dominating an overwhelmingly Dravidian population. Nevertheless, the hypothesis continues to have much hold on the minds of the non-brāhmaṇa intelligentsia apparently because of its political implications.

B. N. Nair's *The Dynamic Brahmin*[53] may be cited as another example of the work done under this ideology. Nair sets himself the task of analysing "the various techniques of social control employed by the Brahmins from the dim past of India's cultural history up to the present day"[54] and maintains that the Nambudiris came from outside and the Dravidians had neither a developed religion nor any priesthood before the advent of the brāhmaṇas. He remarks that the fusion of the Nāyar and the Izhava communities would have taken place long ago "but for the fact that a social distance was artificially created by the Brahmin".[55] To explain the reasons for the success of the brāhmaṇas he turns to Toynbee's thesis of "Creative Minority" and states that the brāhmaṇas were a small immigrant group playing the role of "cultural conquerors" through conscious motivation adopting

53. Bombay, 1959.
54. *Ibid.* p. 1.
55. *Ibid.* p. 22 fn

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the "technique of mimesis" to control the imitating masses. The brāhmaṇas were both "ethnocentric" and "ethnoexpansionistic", which in simple English means that they maintained their exclusiveness by inbreeding but "in order to strengthen their dwindling number" they also admitted under compulsion of circumstances some outsiders in their ranks; for instance, they admitted certain princes to the "Bhāradvāja gotra" regarding them as inferior brāhmaṇas. Here perhaps Nair is alluding to the Pallava rulers, but, as all historians know, the Pallavas did not swell the ranks of the brāhmaṇas; they came to be regarded as kṣatriyas. Not being a historian, Nair is not committed to substantiate many of his sweeping assertions such as the one given below :

> In South India, the Nayars of Kerala, the Reḍḍis of Mysore and Andhra and the Chettis and Veḷḷalas of Tamilnad had offered spirited resistance for a long time until finally they were engulfed by the waves of crusading Brāhmaṇism at a time when these communities had themselves experienced social disequilibrium through historical or political circumstances.[56]

But in spite of such faults his work is a thought-provoking study, and its very outspokenness is a challenge for a deeper probe into many conventional assumptions.

However, not all the non-brāhmaṇa scholars have taken such an extreme position. Sober and mature historians such as K. M. Panikkar and K. K. Pillay are quite conscious of the fact that there was no large-scale migration of the brāhmaṇas from the north to the south. K. M. Panikkar, evidently relying on the views of R. P. Chanda and J. H. Hutton,[57] states that the intermixture of races at the level of the priests had already taken place at the end of the early Vedic age before the caste system could take shape.[58] The Aryan invasion ceased to have any momentum as a population movement after it reached the

56. Ibid. p. 5.
57. Hutton, *Census of India* (1931 Report), pp. 368, 457; *Caste in India* (Cambridge, 1946), p. 29.
58. *A Survey of Indian History* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1957), p. 10.

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Gangetic valley,[59] and India south of the Vindhyas was largely Dravidian. The two main functions of the caste system were to assimilate local tribes in a broad framework and to preserve the identity of racial elements powerful enough to resist assimilation and maintain their separateness. Panikkar does not join issue over the role of the brāhmaṇas in the south Indian society but scoffs at those Indian scholars who avidly follow the "idea promulgated by some European scholars" that the Dravidians were an earlier group of settlers who came from outside and brought civilization to the south, as if "the people of India cannot develop independent of outside help".[60] In his view the Deccan and peninsular India had from the earliest times a civilization independent of the north. K. K. Pillay, on the other hand, prefers to suspend judgement on the antiquity of the south Indian civilization till some more evidence is forthcoming,[61] but is quite positive that the brāhmaṇas imported the Aryan classification based on varṇa introducing a kind of vertical division which cut across the earlier indigenous horizontal divisions based on regional and occupational considerations.[62] He, however, concedes that only a section of the brāhmaṇas came from the north and ingratiated itself with the local Dravidian rulers. The rest were all indigenous people enlisted in the rank of the brāhmaṇas. Pillay is critical of the use of the term "Aryanization", which in his view gives an undeserved emphasis to the Aryan element, and prefers the word "Indianization".

In post-Independence times political power came to be wielded not only by those communities which were ritually superior but also by those which were numerically strong, and hence anti-brāhmaṇa ideology, which initially symbolized a revolt against brāhmaṇical oppression, itself became a tool of exploitation and intensified social conflict. At the academic level the argu-

59. *Geographical Factors in the Writing of Indian History* (Bombay, 1955), p. 93.

60. *A Survey of Indian History*, p. x.

61. *The Sucindram Temple* (Adyar, Madras, 1953), p. 14.

62. "The Caste System in the Sangam Age", *Journal of Indian History*, xl (April 1962), 513-19; also by the same author, *South India and Ceylon* (Madras, 1963), p. 146.

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ments followed the old pattern, and a renowned brāhmaṇa scholar pointed out[63] that both Agattiyar, the father of the Tamil, and Tolkappiyar were brāhmaṇas; but since myths formed the main basis of such contentions much depended upon the historian's subjective standpoint. Thus the famous Tamil non-brāhmaṇa scholar Somasundara Bharati firmly repudiated[64] all such suggestions. He wrote that the brāhmaṇas had the peculiar habit of changing Tamil names into their Aryan equivalents; it is possible that the Tamil term Agathiyan was turned into Sanskrit Agastya. Citing the myth of brāhmaṇical ancestry of the poet Tiruvalluvar, the same scholar further wrote that whenever the brāhmaṇas came across a Tamil poet who could rise to great heights "they grew immensely jealous" and attributed to him a brāhmaṇa fatherhood while his non-brāhmaṇa mother was said to have been of low caste. On the other hand, as if in answer to the theory of brāhmaṇa immigration from the north, in a recent study N. Subrahmanian observes[65] that the ruling chieftains of the Śaṅgam age, Veḷirs, and their followers, Veḷalars (Veḷḷalas), were non-Aryan north Indian immigrants. He reiterates the view that the majority of the brāhmaṇas in Śaṅgam and subsequent ages were indigenous priests deeply attached to Tamil language and culture, and only a very small number of them had come from the north.

Preoccupied with the problem of the antiquity of Dravidians and the question of Aryanization, Tamil historians paid little attention to other aspects of the social system. No doubt some of them have touched upon such topics as sections of the population, status of women and marriage customs in the Śaṅgam age as well as dress, food habits and pastimes of these people, but they have not taken any notice of the stages in the evolution of the Tamil society throughout this long span. A basic difficulty in adopting an evolutionary approach in the treatment of the Śaṅgam literature lies in the fact that not enough attention—nothing comparable to that given to Vedic literature—has been

63. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *History of South India*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1966), p. 76.
64. Quoted by B. N. Nair, op. cit., p. 51.
65. op. cit., p. 254.

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devoted to Śaṅgam poetry which took several hundred years to compose; and whatever effort has been made to mark out its various strata has not received due consideration.[66] Several so-called Śaṅgam works such as the *Paripāḍal, Kalittogai, Tirumurugarruppadai, Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimekalai* are regarded by reliable authorities[67] as post-Śaṅgam compositions; at any rate they constitute the latest strata in the traditional classification of Śaṅgam literature. But the historians of the Śaṅgam society have generally made no distinction between the earlier and later strata and have drawn freely on all these sources, with the result that the picture they present of the Tamil social structure is uniformly homogeneous without any variations or changes, which *a priori* must have taken place because of the increasing infiltration of Aryan influence as well as the confrontation of the settled well-organized communities with the primitive tribes surrounding them. Kanakasabhai's is a pioneering work written when Śaṅgam studies were still in their initial stages; many poems were not yet published and had to be

66. K. K. Pillay's *A Social History of Tamils,* i (Madras, 1969), also plods on the old pattern describing the diet, dress, occupations, trade, education, institution of caste, marriage, the manner of disposal of the dead, etc., of the Tamils in the Śaṅgam age. In the absence of a critical chronological analysis of his sources, his generalizations have become quite superficial and often contradictory. For example, he writes that "neither the kṣatriyas nor the vaiśyas were organised on a clear-cut basis" (p. 234, also see p. 244) but in chapter VIII entitled "Everyday Life" he states unhesitatingly that the individuals belonging to different varṇas "attended to their respective duties, the brahmins took to trade and business, while the Sudras and the numerous groups of people under that class attended to agriculture or the arts and crafts" (p. 320). His view that the position of women deteriorated owing to the influence of Jainism and Buddhism, which regarded women as a source of distraction, is a curious supposition unsupported by evidence. It is well known that women enjoyed higher position in Buddhism and Jainism than in brāhmaṇism. If Śaṅgam literature reflects gradual deterioration in the position of women, it ought to be interpreted with reference to the transition of a tribal or semi-tribal agrarian society to a varṇa-divided society.

67. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri (ed.), *A Comprehensive History of India,* ii (Bombay, 1957), 503; S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, ibid. p. 669 f; *History of Tamil Language and Literature* (Madras, 1956); also see C. Jesudasan and Hephzibah Jesudasan, *A History of Tamil Literature* (YMCA Publishing House, Calcutta, 1961), p. 39f.

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consulted by him in manuscript. Hence it may be too much to expect that he should have established a firm chronology. On the basis of the Gajabāhu-Śenguṭṭuvan synchronism he correctly dated the Śaṅgam age in the early centuries of the Christian era, but his assumption that the work mentioning this synchronism also belongs to the same age is now rejected on linguistic and other grounds of internal evidence. So the picture he presents is necessarily faulty and based on wrong premises. With Dikshitar chronology never seems to have been a strong point. But his rather discursive treatment of the social life of the ancient Tamils contains an interesting account of their marriage customs, which he compares with those prevailing in some castes and tribes listed by Thurston. A more systematic treatment of the subject is to be found in N. Subrahmanian's *Śaṅgam Polity*.

However, Subrahmanian's work suffers from one major defect: he makes no attempt to establish a relative chronology of the Śaṅgam works. He thought it quite unnecessary because of a pre-conceived notion that the period beginning with the foundation of the Maurya dynasty in the fourth century B.C. to the rise of the Pallavas in the sixth century A.D. "witnessed a continuous culture" which underwent no change.[68] At one place he remarks[69] that the mass of the Śaṅgam literature covers a period of three to four generations or about two hundred years and should be ascribed to a pre-fourth century date, that is, prior to the Kalabhra interregnum,[70] but in the concluding portion of his discussion on the age of the Śaṅgam he writes that the entire body of literature classified as Śaṅgam belongs[71] "to the few centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era", the *Tolkāppiyam* being still earlier. It reflects the conditions prevailing in Tamilaham before the beginning of the seventh century A.D. He regards the *Śilappadikāram* and *Maṇimekalai* as "pre-Pallavan", that is, prior to the seventh century A.D. As such he need not have joined issue with Nilakanta Sastri over the date of the *Śilappadikāram*, for in describing it as a post-Śaṅgam work Sastri places

68. Subrahmanian, op. cit., p. 25.
69. Ibid. p. 28.
70. Ibid. p. 29.
71. Ibid. p. 32.

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it roughly in the fifth century A.D., well within the upper limit of the Śangam age laid down by Subrahmanian.

Subrahmanian provides a characteristically idealistic interpretation of the caste system. He thinks[72] that the Tamil caste system depended entirely on the brāhmaṇas; the brāhmaṇas of the Śaṅgam age were such ideal priests, scholars and philosophers that the people willingly accepted their superiority. Another reason for this was that most of the brāhmaṇas were natives of Tamilaham. The Tamil priests, sages and learned men were so much attracted by the metaphysics of the Aryan brāhmaṇas that they converted themselves to brāhmaṇism and themselves became the custodians of the Aryan Vedic culture. He is not prepared to admit[73] that the brāhmaṇas could have been meat-eaters in the Śaṅgam age despite the evidence put forth by S. Vaiyapuri Pillai and accepted by K. A. Nilakanta Sastri; on the contrary, he gives a far-fetched explanation that the brāhmaṇa poet Kapilar assumed the role of a Pāṇar in expressing his appreciation of meat and wine; in real life he did not do so. Subrahmanian even tries[74] to absolve Tolkāppiyar of the charge of foisting the varṇa system on the Tamil social structure by making a rather vague statement that Tolkāppiyar was "only trying to mention in the *Marabial* such castes as had acquired distinct characteristics" (of varṇa?). If so, we fail to understand why the *araśar* (the rulers or the ruling caste) are mentioned in the *Marabial*, for the *araśar* had acquired no distinct caste characteristics and married freely among the Veḷḷalas, the fourth caste mentioned in the same passage. Subrahmanian says that the introduction of the caste system into the Tamil country meant only two things, the superiority of the brāhmaṇas, and the organization of the professions on a hereditary basis. However, if this were correct there should have been no vertical gradations among the non-brāhmaṇa peoples as well, but we know that in the *Śilappadikāram* the goldsmith, while walking, had to maintain proper distance from the vaiśya Kovalan. Subrahmanian himself refers to a *Puram* passage in which a Pulaiyan is described as a low-born

72. Ibid. p 255f.
73. Ibid. p. 261.
74. Ibid. p. 273.

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one.[75] It appears that his main concern is to explain the myth of the superiority of the brāhmaṇas on idealistic lines, and so he does not take into account the factors which led to a hierarchical regrouping of the entire society. He is, of course, quite right in his contention that the south Indian caste system was not an exact replica of the northern system, for the two middle varṇas, in spite of isolated attempts at such categorization, did not exist in Tamilaham; but for the rise of a powerful brāhmaṇa varṇa only in south Indian society we may have to seek deeper causes, such as the useful role of this varṇa in transforming a primitive tribe into a rural caste society through acculturation and other peaceful methods, its pre-eminent success on account of its superior knowledge and ideology in helping the tribal kings rise much above their ordinary kinsmen, and the interdependence of this varṇa and the ruling group in buttressing each other's claims to superiority. No kṣatriya and vaiśya varṇas could however arise in the Tamil society, for rulers derived from the tribal groups lost their separate identity when they lost political dominance after enjoying "kṣatriyahood" as long as their power lasted. It is suggested that the vaiśya varṇa did not arise in south India, as at the time of the progress of brāhmaṇism in this region the distinction between the vaiśyas and śūdras had already become blurred.[76]

The foregoing remarks receive full confirmation from the history of the subsequent epoch, the age of the Pallavas. The Pallava rulers describe themselves as members of the Bhāradvāja *gotra* and descendants of the legendary brāhmana hero Aśvatthāmā. In a contemporary epigraph[77] the Pallava king Dantivarman is said to have belonged to the *brahma-kṣātra* family. But the Talguṇḍa inscription[78] of the Kadamba king Kakutsthavarman clearly speaks of the Pallavas as kṣatriyas and regrets the influence of the "Pallava kṣatriya" over the brāhmaṇical institution, the *ghaṭikā* of Kāñcī. One of the Pallava kings bore the title

75. Ibid. p. 260.
76. R. S. Sharma, *Social Changes in Early Medieval India* (Delhi, 1969) p. 12.
77. *SII*, xii, no. 48; 88 of 1910 and 529 of 1905.
78. *EI*, viii, no. 5.

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kṣatriyamalla.[79] The former set of evidence led K. P. Jayaswal, and in a recent work[80] T. V. Mahalingam, to believe that the Pallavas were brāhmaṇas, but relying on the latter set of evidence C. Meenakshi asserted emphatically that the Pallavas were kṣatriyas.[81] It seems to us that only an anthropological approach to the problem could solve this riddle. Varṇa categories appear quite fluid at this stage of the history of peninsular India, and even the Kadamba dynasty which was founded by the brāhmaṇa Mayūraśarman adopted the kṣatriya title "varman" in subsequent generations. The mere fact that the Pallavas belonged to a brāhmaṇical *gotra* or claimed the kṣatriya status should not militate against the theory that they had a tribal origin. The forefathers of the modern Sakadvipi or Maga brāhmaṇas are generally acknowledged[82] to have come from ancient Persia long after the close of the Vedic age. But they have Vedic *gotras* such as Kāśyapa, Maudgalya, Gautama, Bhāradvāja, etc. The non-Aryan peoples, when admitted into the Aryan fold, acquired appropriate *gotras*, and in south India *gotra* seems to have become a sign of brāhmaṇization and a symbol of status.[83] S. K. Aiyangar and R. Gopalan[84] have shown that the term "Pallava" is a literal translation of the Tamil "Toṇḍaiyar" formed from the word *toṇḍai*, literally, thorny caper plant; and epigraphy supports the close connection of the Pallavas with the creeper which might have been their tribal totem. Meenakshi suggests that the Pallavas, although non-Tamils originally, "adopted the manners of the Tamil country such as the use of a family tree or plant".[85] We may

79. *EI*, xviii.

80. *Kāñcīpuram in Early South Indian History* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1969), p. 23f.

81. *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas* (Madras, 1938), p. 12.

82. R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems* (Reprint, Indological Book House, 1965), pp. 153-55; V. C. Srivastava, "Antiquity of Magas in India", *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 30th Session (Bhagalpur, 1968), p. 86f.

83. R. N. Nandi, "Gotra and Social Mobility in the Deccan" paper presented at the 32nd Session of the Indian History Congress, Jabalpur, 1970.

84. *History of the Pallavas of Kanchi* (Madras, 1928), p. 21.

85. *loc. cit.*

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point out that the use of the name Pallava, which is the first indication of their connection with the creeper, is found much earlier than their association with the Tamil country. In their inscriptions they are also described as belonging to the Kāḍava family, that is, the family of the foresters, which fact lends support to the view that they were a branch of some Deccanese tribe inhabiting the forest regions. The Tamil literature speaks of a people known as Toṇḍaiyars and Kāḍavas.[86] The Pallavas were champions of Sanskrit tradition and brāhmaṇical culture. They cleared the forests and made numerous land grants to the brāhmaṇas along with slaves[87] and agricultural implements, ostensibly to earn religious merit but also with a view to bringing vast tracts of virgin land under cultivation. The "enlightened landowners" came to be regarded as *bhūdevas* or gods on earth,[88] and there was close interdependence between the brāhmaṇas and the ruling group. But the ascription of kṣatriyahood to the Pallavas or Kadambas did not give rise to a viable kṣatriya varṇa, for these families seem to have been powerful splinter tribal groups, who, breaking the tribal bonds, married freely in the ruling families of any caste or tribe, and with their decline the "kṣatriyas" were not to be heard of.

No other scholar has perhaps contributed as much to the history of the south as K. A. Nilakanta Sastri. His writings are remarkable for their thorough and critical approach and cover a wide span right from the age of the Saṅgam to the Vijayanagar period. He makes a judicious use of archaeology as a source and shows full awareness of modern techniques and recent researches. His valuable monographs on the Coḷas and Pāṇḍyan kingdom deal not only with the political history of the times but also throw light on social and cultural life, and his *A History of South India* being a concise and masterly survey of all aspects of south Indian history to the middle of the seventeenth century A.D. is invaluable to students of south Indian history and has gone into several editions.

86. Gopalan, op. cit., p. 17.
87. Hirahadagalli grant: D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization*, i (Calcutta, 1965), no. 65.
88. Meenakshi, op. cit., p. 159.

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Nilakanta Sastri believes that "the thought of the historian is an original fundamental activity of human mind which is quite independent of anything else" and a historian "indulges in an act of creative imagination...that is why the state of the mind of the historian has such a large effect on the quality of the works of history".[89] In other words, present conditions influence the work of a historian, and this finds full confirmation in his interpretation of the social life of the early Tamils. He stresses the point that the terms "Aryan" and "Dravidian" have no ethnic but merely a cultural significance and agrees with the views of Fürer-Haimendorf on the Dravidian problem with certain modifications. According to Haimendorf the Dravidians are to be identified with the iron-using Megalithic folk who came to south India from West Asia by sea around 500 B.C. Nilakanta Sastri accepts this proposition after pushing back the date of the Dravidian immigration to around 1000 B.C., so as to harmonize it with the evidence of Aśokan inscriptions, which speak of four well established Tamil kingdoms. He states that the Dravidian civilization of south India is much younger than hitherto presumed, and "the Aryan occupation of the North and the Dravidian occupation of the South were more or less contemporary".[90] He is particularly caustic in his remarks against those who are prompted by so-called "patriotism" to deny all foreign origins and connect Tamil history with geological changes that occurred millions of years ago.[91]

But the views of Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf[92] have not won general acceptance. Haimendorf is a social anthropologist who noticed certain similarities between the megaliths of the south and those found in the Mediterranean region, Caucasus and Iran. He further observed that the area of distribution of the south Indian megaliths coincided with that now occupied by the speakers of Dravidian languages, and so he concluded that

89. *Historical Method in Relation to Indian History* (Madras, 1956), pp. 3-5.

90. *History of South India*, pp. 64-65.

91. *Historical Method*, p. 5; *Cultural Contacts*, pp. 3f, 19.

92. "When, How and from Where did the Dravidians Come to India?", *Indo-Asian Culture*, ii, no. 3 (Delhi, January 1954), 238-47.

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the builders of the megaliths must have come from the Mediterranean area and, subduing the earlier Neolithic peoples who were in a nomadic food-gathering stage in the south, introduced the parent Dravidian language, from which modern Dravidian languages are derived. As the West Asian monuments are placed somewhere around 1500 B.C. and the south Indian monuments at first in 300 B.C.[93] and later between 700 and 400 B.C.,[94] the theory suffers from a wide chronological gap. This is however considerably bridged by recent C-14 datings, which have pushed back the date of megaliths in the south to the beginnings of the first millennium B.C.[95] But excavations at T. Narsipur in Mysore and Nāgārjunikoṇḍa and Piklihal in Andhra Pradesh have shown that there were settled communities of the Neolithic people in these regions, and the changes brought about by the Megalithic folk at these sites were not of such magnitude as previously thought.[96] There is a remarkable continuity of culture between the late Neolithic and early Megalithic phases at Hallur in the Dharwar district of Mysore. A substantial part of the present population of the south shows physical affinities to the Neolithic peoples, and many of their culture traits have survived in modern times. In view of these pieces of evidence the Allchins find it difficult to believe that the Dravidian languages do not owe their origin to the authors of the Neolithic cultures.[97] We may add that the racial identity of the original Dravidians is still uncertain. Following one group of ethnologists Nilakanta Sastri identifies them with the round-headed Armenoids, whose descendants constitute a comparatively small percentage of the Tamil population and are absent in Kerala.[98] But relying on another

93. R. E. M. Wheeler, "Brahmagiri and Chandravalli, 1947", *Ancient India*, no. 4 (1947-48), 202; *Early India and Pakistan* (London, 1959), p. 163.

94. The view of D. H. Gordon quoted by Haimendorf, op. cit., p. 243.

95. K. N. Dikshit, "Origin of Megaliths" in *Problems of Megaliths in India*, Memoirs of the Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, no. 3 (Varanasi, 1969), 1f.

96. H. D. Sankalia, *Indian Archaeology Today* (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1962), pp. 104-5.

97. Bridget and Raymond Allchin, *The Birth of Indian Civilization* (Penguin Series, 1968), p. 326.

98. *History of South India*, pp. 60-61.

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group of scholars Father Heras expresses the view that the Dravidians are a branch of the Mediterranean race.[99] Earlier, working from a different angle, Ehrenfels had come to the conclusion that the Nāyars of Kerala were the true inheritors of the cultural traditions of the Indus civilization and they brought the Dravidian languages to south India.[100] Ethnologists are of the view that the Nāyars of Kerala and the Veḷḷalas of Tamil Nadu belong to the same stock. It seems that like the Aryan problem the Dravidian problem is another big red herring drawn across the path of Indian historians.

However, Nilakanta Sastri lays much stress on the harmonious blending of the Aryan and Dravidian in Tamil culture, and in his opinion there was no resistance to Aryan influence; the Śaṅgam literature unmistakably proves that the Aryan culture was welcomed everywhere in the south.[101] He underlines the role of the brāhmaṇas in the development of the Tamil culture and is even prepared to admit the possibility that "Dravidian (Tamil) may also be regarded as one of the Prakrits of India".[102] He deprecates the recent tendency to attach undue importance to pre- and non-Aryan elements.[103] In his opinion pre-Aryan Tamil culture was rather primitive and "poorish", and the advent of the Aryans proved to be the turning point.[104]

An idealized picture of social harmony is a constantly recurring theme in the writings of Nilakanta Sastri. There were no social tensions either in the age of the Śaṅgam or in the subsequent Pallava and Coḷa epochs. "The general atmosphere was one of social harmony and contentment with the existing order."[105] In *The Cōḷas*[106] he writes:-

> The political spirit of the time aimed at securing the harmony of classes rather than equality. A healthy society based on

99. Op. cit., p. 63.
100. *Mother-right in India* (Hyderabad, 1941).
101. *History of South India*, p. 64f.
102. Ibid. p. 10.
103. Ibid. p. 58.
104. *The Culture and History of the Tamils* (Calcutta, 1964), p. 7.
105. *History of South India*, p. 319.
106. (Madras, 1955), p. 508.

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> a general distribution of small properties, which was free from the glaring economic oppression of one class by another, had no particular use for the ideals of modern democracy.

He comes back to this idea again and again, and remarks:

> There is practically no evidence of ugly social conflicts and jealousies such as those between Brahmins and non-Brahmins of more recent times. The general impression derived is one of social harmony which was removed alike from the placid content which knows no ambition and the blind and ruthless pursuit of class interests.[107]

Sastri does not make allowance for the fact that since our sources are mostly the documents of the privileged class, they do not reflect the conditions and reactions of the lower classes in general. The very fact that there was an increase in caste stratification and hardening of caste rules leading to the splitting of castes in the Coḷa times[108] suggests that there were social tensions, for rigidity implies greater exclusiveness which would hardly grow in an atmosphere of harmony. Even earlier, traces of conflict are not altogether wanting. Sastri does not discuss the social content of the revolt of the Kalabhras, and brushes aside the stories of the persecution of the Jainas at the instance of the Śaiva saints Appar and Sambandar as misguided pious fabrications of over-zealous brāhmaṇa hagiologists; he does not consider that the Jaina tradition also confirms these stories, He conveniently ignores the concrete evidence of a panel of the Vaikuṇṭhaperumāḷ temple at Kāñcī showing the impalement of two Jainas or Buddhists under the orders of Nandivarman Pallavamalla.[109] The same king is known to have made a grant of two villages to 108 brāhmaṇas after exterminating all those whose deeds were offensive to religion.[110] This is generally regarded as a reference to Jainas although the inscription does not clear-

107. Ibid. p. 546.

108. Arokiaswamy, *Transactions of the Archaeology Society of South India*, 1956-57, p. 2f.

109. Meenakshi, *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, 63, pl. XIII, 5.

110. *IA*, viii (1879), 274f.

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ly say so. The Pallava kingdom was going through a critical period; a severe famine had shaken the finances of the kingdom and tensions were apparently mounting. The fact that the brāhmaṇa residents of the *ghaṭikā* of Kāñcī played an important part in the accession of Nandivarman Pallavamalla to the Pallava throne not merely explains the king's partisan attitude towards them but also indicates the power and influence wielded by the brāhmaṇas in the Pallava kingdom.

Recently a paper[111] presented at the 32nd Session of the Indian History Congress at Jabalpur made an interesting attempt to show that the brāhmaṇical institutions of *ghaṭikā* and *sālai* patronized by the Pallava, Coḷa and Cera monarchs were para-military organizations whose members acquired proficiency in arms as well as in Vedic learning. These institutions, apparently the centres for disseminating brāhmaṇical culture, also played a significant role in contemporary politics. It draws attention to the Pārthivapuram copper plates of the Āy king Karuṇandatakkan which speaks of a *sālai* established for the ninety-five *caṭṭar* or brāhmaṇas who had military training and received instructions in the Vedic lore. On the basis of this record Narayanan further states that the Kāṇḍalūr *sālai* destroyed by the Cola kings Rājarāja and Rājendra I was not a harbour anchoring the Cera fleet but an important brāhmaṇical institution which also functioned as a great military centre, and this is the reason which made the Coḷa panegyrists regard it as a great achievement. The *ghaṭikās* or *ghaṭikāsthānas* mentioned in the Pallava and Coḷa inscriptions were parallel institutions in Tamil Nadu as is obvious from the Tālaguṇḍa inscription which shows that Mayūraśarman, the brāhmaṇa founder of the Kadamba dynasty, came in conflict with the Pallava cavalry force at the *ghaṭikā* of Kāñcī. It further explains the evidence of the Velūrpaḷayam grant, which records that an early Pallava king Skandaśiṣya, grandson of Vīrakurcā, seized the *ghaṭikā* of brāhmaṇas from the Cāḷukya king Satyāśraya, the capture of a *ghatikā* from an enemy being evidently an act of military distinction. If this view, which is further supported

111. M. G. S. Narayanan, "Kaṇḍalur-Sālai—New Light on the History of Aryan Expansion in South India", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 32nd Session (Jabalpur, 1970), p. 125f.

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by certain passages of the eighth century Jaina text *Kuvalayamālā*, is accepted, it adds a new dimension to our understanding of the process of Aryanization in south India. With the concentration of economic and military power in brāhmaṇical cultural institutions attached to temples and engaged in disseminating brāhmaṇical ideology in predominantly aboriginal and non-brāhmaṇical areas, it is difficult to assume that the process of acculturation was entirely peaceful, free from all conflicts or tensions. Perhaps a study of south Indian iconography may reveal that the absorption of tribal deities in the great tradition reflects not so much harmonious synthesis as forcible subjugation. The view that the temple was the nucleus round which centred "all that was best in the arts of civilized existence" and it regulated them "with the humaneness born of the spirit of Dharma" having "few parallels in the annals of mankind"[112] does not take into account the part it played in fostering superstition and restricting social and cultural mobility. The temple stood for status quo, and its role in keeping the large majority of landless labour harmlessly "content" or blissfully ignorant of the fact of exploitation is yet to be examined.

The striking difference in the wealth and power of the brāhmaṇas and the ordinary masses is well reflected in the records of the period. Meenakshi writes[113] that in the Pallava period peasants lived in mud houses with thatched roofs, and structures of any permanent kind were considered a luxury, apparently being confined to the brāhmaṇas only. With the exception of the brāhmaṇas living in the *brahmadeya* and *devadāna* villages, peasants had to seek government licence for erecting structures of burnt bricks. Nilakanta Sastri himself provides, what he calls, an isolated example of "rural protectionism" by citing an inscription of the time of Kullottuṅga I. This epigraph orders the artisans and professional men of Tribhuvani to carry on their crafts and professions within the boundaries of the village in which they resided; if any of them served the residents of any other village he was to be regarded as guilty of a grave offence against law.[114]

112 *The Cōḷas*, p. 654.
113. *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*, p. 138.
114. *The Cōḷas*, p. 511.

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Evidently this is an evidence of the degradation of the artisans and craftsmen to the conditions of serfdom. R. S. Sharma has shown[115] how during the period A.D. 1000-1200 restrictions upon the mobility of artisans and peasants were imposed under a feudal economy in northern India, till these people became virtually serfs of the rich landowners. The history of peninsular India is yet to be studied from this angle.

One may not agree with Nilakanta Sastri that in a historical argument the only thing that "matters is the contemporary man's view of the course of events".[116] For a historian's task is not merely to find out how an event was viewed by the contemporaries but also why it was viewed in that manner. The absence of consciousness of the type of social relations being formed or existing in a society does not mean the absence of those relations. What appears to him social harmony is more likely the passivity and inertia of the labouring masses before technical progress, which fact may explain to some extent how large communities could be condemned to low positions by dominant groups. Yet at least in south India it does not seem that there were no social conflicts before A.D. 1200. The endless theological wrangles which characterize the religious history of south India from the seventh century A.D., if not earlier, the crusade of the Āḻvārs and Nāyanārs against Jainism and Buddhism and of Śaṅkarācārya against Buddhism, the reformist movements spearheaded by Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Bāsava and the polarization of south Indian society in two main varṇas suggest the necessity of a deeper probe into the question of social tensions.

Studies in the social history of the early Tamils are still in their infancy. So far the primary concern of the historian of south India has been to provide a clear and continuous picture of the ancient political and administrative institutions, to which a treatment of contemporary social life is sometimes appended for the sake of completeness. Even in these lucubrations the varṇa concept is given some attention but the *jāti* structure which is extremely complicated in the south has hardly received any notice. In recent times some ethnocentric studies of particular communi-

115. *Indian Feudalism* (Calcutta, 1965), pp. 210-62.
116. *Historical Method*, pp. 9-10.

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ties have appeared,[117] but their aim is to prove the high status and glorious past of the communities concerned, and these are of no use in solving sociological-historical problems such as the structural position of a community in historic times and its relation with other castes. It is time that social history received its due and an attempt was made to undertake problem-oriented researches in the field.

117. To cite one example, in a pamphlet entitled *A Historical Enquiry into the Antiquity of the Kulāla Community in Tamilnadu*, Subrahmanian of the Madras University tries to prove the antiquity of the Kulālas (potters) as a ruling community and their connection with ancient royal dynasties. It is claimed that the legendary king Vikramāditya, the Śātavāhanas, the Hoyśālas and in later times the ruling house of Mysore, all these illustrious rulers and many others were of Kulāla descent. It is published in 1969 by Tamilaha Kulālar Peravai, the association of the potter community in Tamil Nadu. It is interesting to note that Subrahmanian himself is a Tamil brāhmaṇa.

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Feudalism and Mahāyāna Buddhism

A. K. WARDER

Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi claimed to be applying Marxism to the study of Indian history.[1] Nothing, surely, is more remarkable in Indian studies than the extent to which the would-be "Marxist" historians have been able to disagree with one another. Probably this indicates that "Marxism" is generally very far from being the set of dogmas it is sometimes alleged to be by its critics, and that is a healthy state of affairs for future Marxist research; on the other hand it makes it extraordinarily difficult to define just what it is that characterizes a "Marxist" approach to history. After some reflection on this question, having read Marx and some of the "Marxists", the present writer suggested that what Marx himself intended was nothing but the application of scientific method to history.[2] This suggestion met some friendly criticism from the then doyen of Soviet historians of India, the late I. M. Goldberg, whom the writer met in Moscow in 1960. Goldberg maintained that the theory of the class struggle was something more than just the application of scientific method to history and that theory was essential to Marx's standpoint. It could perhaps be replied that the theory that the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles is itself a scientific hypothesis put forward by Marx (and Engels) on the basis of a study of European history from ancient Rome to

1. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1956), Sec. 1.3.

2. "Desiderata in Indian Historiography: An Essay", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*. ii (Leiden, 1959), 213.

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"modern bourgeois society". It was modified by Engels in a footnote to later editions of *The Communist Manifesto* to the effect that in prehistoric times, and even comparatively recently among tribal societies, the social organization had been different, a fact which was practically unknown when the *Manifesto* was first published in 1848. This might suggest that even this basic hypothesis might be modified if evidence came to light which contradicted it. Is it then necessary to regard it as different in principle from any other scientific hypothesis, looked upon by those who apply it not as a dogma but simply as having a very high probability of being true in the light of available evidence? Scientific research progresses by way of accumulating evidence in order to test hypotheses; in the light of the tests they may be discarded or modified or regarded as so far confirmed. Do we not see just this kind of progress, in this case of modification, in Engels' Preface to the First Edition of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and State* (1884), where he states that Marx himself had intended to work out this modification, after reading L. H. Morgan's *Ancient Society*,[3] which supplied the necessary evidence, but had not found time to do it before his death (in 1883). Perhaps we may resolve the difficulty by saying that the hypothesis concerning the fundamental importance of class struggles is indeed "Marx's Hypothesis", and that the testing of it is characteristic of his work, but that nevertheless it was conceived in a scientific spirit as suggested by following out the implications of what Engels calls, in the Preface referred to above, the "materialist conception" of history: human history is the production and reproduction of human life, depending on the production of the means of subsistence.

Kosambi[4] naturally takes up the question of Marx's division of history into periods, distinguished by the particular classes between which the main struggles then took place, such as slave owners and slaves in ancient Rome, capitalists and wage earners in bourgeois society. It is clear that Marx's views here too did not remain fixed. In earlier works he speaks of various "systems",

3. (MacMillan, London, 1877).

4. loc. cit.

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taking as his point of departure the division of labour. Such are the patriarchal, the caste, the feudal and corporative.[5] However, in *The German Ideology*[6] (by Marx and Engels jointly) we read:

> The various stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of ownership; i.e. the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument, and product of labour.

The forms of ownership are then set out: (1) "tribal", (2) "ancient communal and state ownership which proceeds especially from the union of several tribes into a city by agreement or by conquest, and which is still accompanied by slavery" (slavery is described on the basis of this system), (3) "feudal or estate property". This might seem to be the final form of the theory corresponding to the first three of the "five main stages" generally accepted later. Yet *The Poverty of Philosophy* was written two or three years later than *The German Ideology,* with its "caste" system which is referred to again in the "Introduction" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,*[7] written ten years later still (1857). This "Introduction" goes on to speak of a "tribute" state superimposed on some other form by conquest and of the pastoral Mongolian state in which devastation of conquered territory was appropriate[8] (meaning presumably depopulation and reversion of land from agriculture to pasture). Apparently these are secondary systems, for in the "Preface" to the same work[9] we find the statement:

> In broad outlines we can designate the Asiatic, the ancient, the feudal, and the modern bourgeois methods of production as so many epochs in the progress of the economic formation of society.

Here it appears that "Asiatic" is equivalent to "tribal" or primitive

5. *The Poverty of Philosophy* (International Publishers, New York, no date), p. 144; cf. *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Bharati Library, Calcutta, no date), p. 28.
6. (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1942), p. 9ff.
7. p. 286.
8. p. 288.
9. p. 13.

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communist. In later works Marx alludes to the village commune, particularly in India, apparently regarding it as a characteristic "Asiatic" feature, a remnant of the system once prevailing throughout the world. This "Asiatic" method of production requires further examination.

It would seem in fact that Marx was unaware of any real development beyond primitive communism (village communes) in Asia until the European colonial period. He probably supposed that the states there were merely secondary "tribute" states superimposed on an essentially tribal and village communal system. Thus in an article on "The Future Results of British Rule in India"[10] he wrote:

> Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but the history of the successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society.

Marx here is embedded in the ordinary European outlook of his day, which had been codified by Hegel: the Asians are barbarians and the ancient Greeks miraculously created civilization, inherited by the later peoples of Europe; real history and social progress, along with philosophy, art, etc., begins with the Greeks and is essentially the history of Europe. At that time, of course, nothing was known in Europe of Indian history apart from some of the "intruders". For the Asians as "barbarians" we may refer to a passage in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848):

> The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it (the bourgeoisie) batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate.

The *Manifesto* goes on to explain that this means that all nations must adopt the bourgeois mode of production in order to survive. "Barbarian" is here a technical term meaning a society (believed to be) based on the village commune: Asia is supposed not to have reached even the stage of slavery, let alone feudalism. Engels reflects the same Hegelian type of outlook in *Anti-*

10. Published in 1853 and reprinted in *Articles on India* (People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1951), p. 67.

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Dühring,[11] where he regards the advance to slavery in Greece and Rome as the basis of the subsequent advance towards socialism and speaks in the same context of "the most barbarous form of state, oriental despotism", based on the ancient communes. It is not surprising that Marx and Engels knew even less of Asian social history, or of Asian art and science, than the leading orientalists of their day. Marxist theory, in short, is based on the history of Europe only, and the question (raised in the essay "Desiderata in Indian Historiography")[12] is whether its hypotheses will stand the test of being applied to Asia. It should be added in this connection that in the Soviet Union as long ago as 1931 there was a discussion among historians on the "Asiatic mode of production". Godes in his report on the discussion concluded that there was no "Asiatic mode" in the sense of a development peculiar to Asia: the European intruders had encountered forms of feudalism; in other words the countries of Asia had developed through variations of the same main stages as Europe. This seems to have been the generally accepted Marxist view since then, remote as it probably is from the view of Marx himself. So we return to our first point.

Kosambi at any rate was quite ready to modify Marx's stages of ownership when applied to Indian history. Thus he claimed to show that India never had a "classical slave economy in the same sense as Greece or Rome".[13] There was a class of slaves (presumed to be "temple slaves") in the Indus civilization,[14] also a class of traders,[15] a ruling class of priests ("dominance of religion")[16] and a productive class of cultivators,[17] who presumably were not slaves (Kosambi does not seem to suggest what their status was; one might suggest village communes somehow under the direction of the priests who supervised irrigation and thus

11. *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1934), p. 203.
12. *JESHO*, ii (1959), 217f.
13. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History*, p. 10.
14. Ibid. p. 55.
15. Ibid. pp. 59, 62, etc.
16. Ibid. p. 61.
17. Ibid. p. 62.

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made large-scale agriculture possible). During the same period[18] the "stage" would be similar to that in Mesopotamia, where most of the land was owned by communes under "elders" who increased their power until they acquired personal slaves and some private land, the remaining and most fertile land being owned by the king but the royal and temple granaries being filled by taxation of the communes. This might seem to be appropriately described as a variety of the second form of ownership set out in *The German Ideology*: ancient communal and state ownership "accompanied by" slavery (of which the "classical slave economy" could be considered a sub-variety). We may note in passing that Ruben in his *Einführung in die Indienkunde*[19] suggests that Indian society in both the Indus and Mauryan periods should be described as slave-owning on the ground that the ruling classes were able to maintain their dominance through their ownership of slaves (who constituted the labour force processing the grain surplus, though probably not the productive class). If these facts are correct, it is a matter of choice of definitions how we describe such a society.[20] After the Aryan conquest Kosambi found a servile class of *dāsas* who were not chattel slaves[21] but "helots"[22] (śūdras). The Maurya economy was based on śūdra cultivators.[23] It would in fact seem to be appropriate for India to keep the Indian term "śūdra" to describe the main productive class in that period, with "helot" as the nearest European equivalent. The development of this śūdra-based society has been very fully treated by R. S. Sharma in his *Śūdras in Ancient India*,[24] who points out for example that the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* (1st century B.C.?) recommends reducing the śūdras to slavery,[25] a recommendation which does not seem ever to have been very generally carried out.

18. For a Marxist account of the latter see Nikolsky, "Land Tenure in Mesopotamia", *Istorichesky* (1945).
19. Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1954.
20. *JESHO*, ii (1959), 215f.
21. Op. cit., p. 92.
22. Ibid. p. 104.
23. Ibid. p. 218.
24. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1958.
25. Ibid. p. 196.

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According to Sharma[26] the institution of slavery instead weakened in the period *c.* A.D. 200-500, a weakening and a corresponding change of outlook which he finds reflected in the Institutes of Yājñavalkya, Nārada and Bṛhaspati, all probably to be dated in that period. In that period Sharma traces the origins of "feudalism",[27] using this term in a very general sense (as applied to society in Europe from the fifth to the fifteenth century A.D.) and evidently understanding it as implying landed property as the basis, with the growth of a class of landowners dominating the cultivators in place of direct control by the state through salaried officials. Yājñavalkya, Nārada and Bṛhaspati provide something like a charter for this kind of "feudalism", with a class of landowners (*kṣetrasvāmins*).[28] According to Sharma the decisive factor in bringing about this new kind of society is the making of land grants along with the administrative power (surrendered by the state to the landowner).[29] This development seems to be found first in the Sātavāhana empire in the second century A.D. (but perhaps earlier), the recipients of such land grants being brāhmaṇas, communities of Buddhist monks and kṣatriyas (the latter apparently only later), but K. A. Antonova is probably right in suggesting that in their case the grants might usually be written on perishable everyday materials instead of on the durable materials appropriate for a religious endowment intended to last for ever;[30] the *Mānava Dharmaśāstra* already provides for non-religious land grants to revenue officials, in place of salaries.[31]

Kosambi takes up the question of "feudalism" in the ninth and tenth chapters of his book.[32] He attempts to distinguish two processes in the development of feudalism: "from above" and "from below". The first (which he thinks developed earlier) is

26. Ibid. p. 228.

27. *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* (Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1959), Chapter xiv: "The Origins of Feudalism in India".

28. Ibid. p. 223.

29. Ibid. p. 202f.

30. K voprosu o razvitii feodalizma v Indii" in *Kratkie Soobshcheniya Instituta Vostokovedeniya* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1952), pp. 23-32.

31. vii. 119.

32. *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History.*

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when a paramount ruler levies tribute from subordinates ruling in their own right in their own territories. Here he has in mind formerly independent rulers who have been conquered and have submitted and become the vassals of the conqueror. The second is the development of landowners in the villages, wielding power over the peasantry, acting as intermediaries between the local people and the state, collecting taxes and passing on a fraction of them to the feudal hierarchy, and liable to military service. This sounds more like the creation of a class of landowners through making land grants, which we have just discussed. One might comment that the "from above" development is not really characteristic of feudalism, though undoubtedly a regular feature of it, since the relationship of a submitted vassal to an overlord is well known in very ancient periods which Kosambi would surely not have thought of as tending towards feudalism. The distinction here would be that the trend in the period of the śūdra-based economy was eventually to eliminate vassals (most thoroughly realized in the empire of Magadha) and assimilate their territories to the central administrative system under salaried (and temporary, i.e. holding office for limited periods, customarily rotated between different offices, certainly not hereditary) officials. In the period of "feudalism" on the other hand such vassals would instead be assimilated to the class of landowners. Kosambi's ninth chapter[33] discusses evidence from the second century A.D. onwards, and in fact seems to think in terms of land grants, in other words of the so-called "from below" type of development. The latter clearly is the essential question, and Kosambi in his own way is simply tracing it, as others have done, adding his own comments. Thus he notes the land grants to communities of Buddhist monks and considers Fa-hsien's account of the *vihāras* in the different countries of India being endowed with lands along with the population on them, the last clause being of uncertain significance (implying serfdom?).[34] Kosambi mentions Buddhism again later,[35] this time Mahāyāna Buddhism in which "gigantic Bodhisattvas (wearing lofty jewelled crowns, or seated upon costly thrones), who always tower high above

34. Ibid. p. 278f.

33. Ibid.
35. Ibid. p. 293.

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the ordinary human beings, show how far the religion had departed from the spirit, actions and precepts of the founder". Here he is thinking of the seventh century. However, he is uncertain about the position of Buddhism in the feudal period, suggesting on the one hand that it has been corrupted by the wealth of its endowments and their accumulating revenues and on the other that Brāhmaṇism was "more convenient"[36] for the "intermediate" (i.e. "from below") landowners, being perhaps less costly and certainly better adapted to the expansion of states by assimilating tribes into a feudal hierarchy (converting them into castes). It will be worth looking a little more closely at the development of Buddhism itself in the period of the growth of feudalism, in order to see whether it was really adapted to the new social system. Let us note in passing that the old idea that Buddhism in India had died out before the Turkish invasions, replaced by "more convenient" Brāhmaṇism, has been exploded by archaeology, by the bringing to light of the vast Buddhist literature of the eighth to the twelfth century in India and not least by the accounts of the Muslims themselves, dedicated to the extermination of idolatry, which for them is practically synonymous with Buddhism. Buddhism continued to flourish in the medieval or feudal period, and where the Turks failed to conquer (Nepal, Tibet, etc.) it flourished till the end of that period.

Mahāyāna Buddhism appears to have originated in the first century B.C. or the first century A.D., in the Sātavāhana empire (more precisely in the Andhra country). Modern students of Buddhism have found it surprisingly different from the Buddhism of the early schools, of the period of the empire of Magadha. Can this change in outlook be regarded as an adaptation to the needs of feudalism, or even as anticipating it by proposing a kind of programme for a new kind of society? In the remainder of this article we shall consider the hypothesis that the development of Mahāyāna Buddhism in some way reflects the transition to feudalism, and is part of the ideological transition accompanying or preparing for the new form of society which developed in India in the early centuries A.D.

36. Ibid. p. 294.

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From the beginning of its history, Buddhism was far from being indifferent to social problems, though superficial students have sometimes supposed that Buddhism means simply turning one's back on the "world". The Buddha and his followers had "gone forth" from society and formed their own communities in which they could lead the "best life" and attain peace of mind. Yet the Buddha is recorded, after his enlightenment, to have spent a great deal of time in the great cities of Magadha, Vrji, Kosala and neighbouring countries. He had renounced the society of the world; yet apparently he hoped to influence it from his vantage point. He is accordingly reported to be in discussion with kings, ministers, soldiers, merchants, artisans, householders and people of many different professions in society. His aim apparently was not simply to provide a "way" for individuals who privately sought peace of mind but also to show a way to bring about the (public) happiness of the whole of human society, or of all living beings. The meditation of the monk incorporates this social aspect of considering all living beings as like oneself (*sarvātmatā*),[37] spreading loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity: through this attitude of mind he at the same time frees himself from the "obstacles" to enlightenment.[38] Moreover the Buddha established "communities" of lay men and women as well as of monks and nuns. There are numerous passages in the *Tipiṭaka* (oldest versions in Pali and Chinese, closely corresponding) where the Buddha reviews social history, discusses principles of good government (both republican and monarchical), social organization and a happy and successful life in (worldly) society.[39] We need not be surprised if Buddhists later continued to take an interest in politics and social problems. It is worth adding before we leave early Buddhism that the organization of the community (*saṃgha*) of monks was republican and democratic, modelled on the constitutions of ancient republics

37. For references see *Pali Tipiṭaka Concordance* of the Pali Text Society *s.v. appamāṇa*.

38. The fullest discussions are at *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (PTS), v, 63ff.

39. See particularly the *Dīgha Nikāya* (and Taisho no. 1 corresponding to it, bracketed here), *suttas* 27(5), 16(2), 26(6), 5(23), 4(22), 31(16)—the layman's *vinaya; Majjhima Nikāya* (Taisho 26) *suttas* 90(212), 93(151), 96(150), 81(63), 52(217), 99(152).

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such as the Vṛjis and based on the doctrine of complete individual responsibility for actions. The Buddha is recorded to have denied for himself any prerogative of guardianship, i.e. personal rule and responsibility, in relation to the community and to have refused to appoint a "successor" to assume such responsibility;[40] the members of the community are individually responsible for themselves and collectively responsible for the government of the community (the collective, democratic government is elaborately set out in the *Vinaya*). Such a constitution was as remote as possible from the spirit of a feudalistic era; indeed it was already anachronistic in the period of the Magadhan empire, providing in effect a community within which ancient freedoms could be preserved at the price of yielding up the wordly life, society at large, to the increasingly centralized states, especially to the new autocratic monarchies which were expanding their power everywhere and liquidating the old republics (we are not here concerned with how this was possible in the Buddha's time). But it is just these communities which Kosambi saw as wealthy landowners in his feudal period, incorporated *en bloc* into the feudal hierarchy. We know (from Tārānātha) that several of the early schools flourished in India down to the twelfth century, their communities presumably having been incorporated without much change into feudal society, but other Buddhists reacted more positively to medieval social trends.

The basic idea of the Mahāyāna is the *bodhisattva* as ideal in place of the *arhant*, that is, undertaking to become a *buddha* in an inconceivably remote future, after an arduous series of lives spent in perfecting the necessary virtues whilst at the same time serving all living beings, instead of aiming immediately at total detachment and *nirvāṇa*. This involved separating the conception of a *buddha* from that of an *arhant*, whereas in early Buddhism these had been very similar, both attaining enlightenment and *nirvāṇa* but the *buddha* having done so without the direct guidance of already existing Buddhist doctrine. In Mahāyāna Buddhism the enlightenment of a *buddha* is quite different from the enlightenment of an *arhant;* it is omniscience instead of simple understanding of the four truths. Among the early schools of

40. *Dīgha Nikāya*, ii, 100.

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Buddhism, it is those of the Mahāsaṃgha group, and especially the Andhra schools (the Caitikas who broke away from the Mahāsaṃgha apparently in the first century B.C. over the rules for entrance into the community[41] and the Pūrva Śaila and Apara Śaila schools which soon split away from them), whose doctrinal trends anticipate the Mahāyāna. The Pali *Kathāvatthu* and its commentary identify as propositions of these schools in Andhra such statements as: the Buddha's discourse is transcendental, his enlightenment was already predetermined when he was born, he could set aside natural laws, even as *bodhisattva* he had enjoyed mastery over the phenomenon of transmigration and could be reborn at will. The Mahāyānist writer Paramārtha[42] regarded the Mahāsaṃgha as the predecessor of the Mahāyāna. The Ceylon tradition ascribes the Ratnakūṭa (apparently the earliest collection of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, though additions were made to it later; otherwise, one of the *sūtras* in that collection) to the Andhras.[43] What really clinches this point of origin of the Mahāyāna is the Mahāyāna traditions (1) of Pūrva Śaila verses, or texts from the *sūtras* of their *Āgamas*, quoted by Candrakīrti[44] in justification of the Mahāyāna (*Prajñāpāramitā* and Madhyamaka) doctrine that phenomena do not in reality occur and cease and (2) of *Prajñāpāramitās* (*sūtras*) in Prakrit among the Śailas.[45] If we turn to the extant *Prajñāpāramitā* itself, in its presumed oldest recension the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, we find the statement that this *sūtra* will be known in the South after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, afterwards in the East (variant reading "West"), then in the North.[46] Finally the famous Madhyamaka teacher Nāgārjuna (second century A.D.) is connected by unani-

41. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, i (Louvain, Muséon, 1958), p. 309f., following Vasumitra.
42. Demiéville in *Melanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, i* (Louvain, 1931), 19ff.
43. Ādikāram, *Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (Migoda Puswella, 1946), p. 100.
44. *Madhyamakāvatāra*, ed. La Vallee Poussin (Bibliotheca Buddhica, St. Petersburg, 1907-12), p. 134f.; *Prasannapadā*, ed. La Vallee Poussin (Bibliotheca Buddhica, St. Petersburg, 1903-13), p. 548.
45. Lamotte, *Asiatica*, p. 387.
46. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, ed. Mitra (Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, 1888), p. 225.

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mous Indian tradition with "Sātavāhana" (as an individual emperor, most probably Vāsiṣṭhiputra Puḷumāyi II); Bu-ston[47] says that he was born in Vidarbha (which was in the Sātavāhana domains), and Tārānātha thinks that towards the end of his life he went to Andhra: by this time, Tārānātha tells us (Chapter 13), Mahāyāna *sūtras* had been brought to northern India (Nalanda, where Nāgārjuna became a monk).

The *Ratnakūṭa Sūtra* (in the narrow sense) is fortunately available in Sanskrit.[48] Its antiquity is guaranteed by its having been translated into Chinese in the latter part of the second century A.D. It is concerned mostly with the *bodhisattva* and his training but includes important theoretical discussions on the nature of "phenomena" (*dharmas*) : they are all "empty"; they are neither permanent nor impermanent. The "thought of enlightenment" (*bodhicitta*) which inspires the *bodhisattva* is not simply of the old enlightenment, of understanding the truths or acquiring the "three sciences"; it is of attaining omniscience, of becoming a *buddha* only, not an *arhant*, and with its first occurrence the *bodhisattva* surpasses all the "pupils" (presumably the *arhants*!) and "isolated *buddhas*" : the "pupils" are not really "sons" of the Buddha (Buddhists).

The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* was also translated into Chinese in the second century A.D. It too insists on the "thought of enlightenment" and in fact begins with this theme, going on to the question of the *bodhisattva* causing innumerable living beings to attain *nirvāṇa*. At the same time it much more conspicuously insists on the "emptiness" doctrine of the phenomena, stating that there is no such phenomenon as a *bodhisattva* and that the thought of enlightenment is "non-thought", nor is there any attainment of *nirvāṇa*. What superficial modern readers have supposed to be paradoxes here are explained by the Mahāyānist commentators by reference to two levels of truth : at the everyday "concealing" (*saṃvṛti*) level there are *bodhisattvas* and the

47. *Chos-hbyung*, tr. Obermiller Materialien zur Kunde des Buddhismus (Heidelberg, 1931-32), ii. 122ff. cf. Tārānātha, Schiefner (St. Petersburg, (1869), as *Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien*.

48. *Kāsyapaparivarta* (i.e. *Ratnakūṭa* in the narrow sense), ed. von Stael-Holstein, Shanghai, 1926.

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attainment of enlightenment and *nirvāṇa*, at the level of ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) there are no *bodhisattvas* and no attainments.

Very remarkable in connection with the *bodhisattva* doctrine is the *Amitābhavyūha* (or *Sukhāvatīvyūha* or *Amitābhaparivarta*),[49] one of the *Ratnakūṭa* collections and translated into Chinese at the same time as the *Ratnakūṭa* already referred to. Here the former *buddha* Lokesvararāja has a monk named Dharmākara who decides to become a *bodhisattva*. Dharmākara however, proceeds to lay down an extraordinary set of conditions first, and will agree to become a *buddha* only if they are fulfilled. Lokeśvararāja endorses them, which presumably guarantees their fulfilment, since the words of a *buddha* could not be false. The underlying idea is that a *bodhisattva* becomes a *buddha* in a particular place and time, in one of the innumerable worlds of the universe as conceived by Buddhists, known as his "*buddha*-field" (*buddhakṣetra*) (the territorial reference, suggesting that a *buddha* is the proprietor of some land, his "field", is striking). Dharmākara insists on the best possible "field", perfect in every conceivable way, with all its inhabitants perfectly happy, gifted with insight and understanding, getting whatever they want. It would also be full of radiance, jewels, incense, fragrant jewel-flowers, musical clouds, etc. Very practical is the stipulation that no one should ever have to wash any clothes, all garments becoming clean automatically. Perhaps ambiguous is the stipulation that none of the inhabitants should have any sense of possessing anything, not even their own bodies. This is of course an old Buddhist ideal but it harmonizes remarkably well with the convenience of a landowner about to take over the fields he has acquired.

Now we are told that this ideal world already exists in the Western sky : Dharmākara has realized his ambition and is now the *buddha* Amitābha established in his land called Sukhāvatī, whose inhabitants spend their time in play, enjoying themselves in perfect harmony. Any living beings from our world who set their minds on Amitābha can be reborn in his world when they

49. ed. Müller, Oxford, 1883 (reprinted in *Mahāyānasūtrasaṃgraha*, i Mithila Institute, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, Darbhanga, 1961).

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die, where they will all be *bodhisattvas*. And among the *bodhisattvas* already there is one of the most famous in popular Mahāyāna Buddhism, Avalokiteśvara, the "Watching Lord" (where the prefix *ava* suggests that this lord is looking down on unhappy humanity). He is the ideal of compassion. Perhaps, however, he is not unrelated to a social ideal of a protecting lord who gives security to helpless people in times of difficulty or anarchy, to people who "commend" themselves to him in a feudalistic sense.[50] The chief advantage of the new system of Buddhism, as of feudal commendation, is the ease with which the humble suppliant can obtain help and protection. No more strenuous training, no more dependence entirely on one's own efforts, no more individual responsibility : one can be reborn in Sukhāvatī without having very strenuously cultivated the roots of good, even without having cultivated them at all, if one thinks of the *buddha* Amitābha with yearning for his world. Everything depends on his compassion. Passive submission was probably the only indispensable qualification for entering the service of a feudal lord.

The ideas of these early Mahāyāna *sūtras* are further developed in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka,* "White Lotus of the True Doctrine", which is perhaps slightly later. It consists mostly of descriptions of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* and their worlds, with wonderful universal transformations, illuminations, appearances of glorious past *buddhas,* etc., calculated to inspire religious awe rather than philosophical understanding. It bases itself on the theory of two levels of truth, however, like the *Prajñāpāramitā,* so that it is possible to understand it in a Madhyamaka sense. The ordinary teaching of the Buddha has been at the concealing level, but at the ultimate level he should not be seen as having attained enlightenment at Gaya : there is no birth and death, rebirth and transmigration or attainment of *nirvāṇa*. The thus-

50. Sharma refers to commendation in the chapter on feudalism (p. 215: correct reference to Rockhill, p. 6) of his book *Aspects* . . . mentioned above; the "Tibetan Buddhist text" he refers to is a translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* (the Sanskrit original is in course of publication from the Gilgit Manuscripts), datable in the fourth or fifth century A.D.; it seems to agree closely with the Pali version, however, and needs critical study.

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gone (in this case the Buddha himself) demonstrates *nirvāṇa* without actually attaining it; for educational purposes (here we return to the concealing level, it seems) he has still twice as long to live as he has already lived, which is millions of ages, and has not yet fulfilled his career as *bodhisattva*. Popularly the White Lotus seems to have been taken at the concealing level, apparently meeting the desire of millions of people to believe in an eternal and omnipotent Buddha watching over their world. The great *bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara*, whom we met in the *Amitābhavyūha*, appears again here, much of the White Lotus being devoted to him (especially Chapter 24). Those in trouble have only to think of this "Watching Lord", and they will be freed from it.

These *sūtras* can be taken as representing the first phase of Mahāyāna, roughly in the first two centuries A.D. The ideas we have briefly elucidated from them above are perhaps enough to show a trend towards an outlook appropriate for a feudal society, of course an ideal feudal society. The independent individual responsibility stressed in early Buddhism has disappeared. Instead we have a world dependent on benevolent lords, able to make its inhabitants ideally happy and to protect them from all dangers provided only that they will put all their trust in them, not rely on their own efforts but simply think of the lord who can do everything. Whether this reflects an already existing feudal order, of landowners administering their property with its inhabitants, or whether it anticipated it with an ideal plan which society ought to follow, we cannot yet say. We may suppose that it was partly both. Given a new social trend, the composers of these *sūtras* thought out an ideal at which it should aim. Underlying their ideas is the basic ideal of the *bodhisattva*, the beginnings of which can be traced back earlier in the Mahāsaṃgha schools. It stands for compassion and benevolence, stressing that aspect of original Buddhism which advocates concern for other people, for society. The *bodhisattva* delays his own *nirvāṇa* and devotes his prolonged transmigration to helping others, finally making the supreme contribution to the happiness of living beings by becoming a *buddha*. The true Buddhist enters into a kind of contract to become a *buddha*, becoming a *bodhisattva* at the moment

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when he makes his formal "commitment" (*praṇidhāna*), preferably in the presence of an existing *buddha* (indeed this may appear a necessary formality : it at least brings about certainty of fulfilling the terms of the contract). On the other hand all living beings are encouraged to trust in the benevolence and compassion of these *bodhisattvas*, especially the greatest of them, as if that were their part of the contract. The *bodhisattvas* and *buddhas* are to protect and to cause all beings to attain *nirvāṇa*; all beings, the ordinary people, are to commend themselves to the protection of these great beings and rely absolutely on their benevolence.

In conclusion we may note briefly the two subsequent major developments within Mahāyāna Buddhism in India : Vijñānavāda (idealism) and the Mantrayāna (popularly known nowadays as tantricism). The transition to an outlook of philosophical idealism among some Mahāyānists may be traced from the ideas in the *Prajñāpāramitā* about the thought which is "non-thought" and the nature of which is "translucent" (*prabhāsvara*, clear), along with Nāgārjuna's proposition that there is no difference between transmigration and *nirvāṇa*.[51] The *Śrīmālā Sūtra*,[52] written probably soon after Nāgārjuna's time, explains that the idea that the forces are impermanent may lead to the annihilationist opinion, whilst the idea that *nirvāṇa* is permanent may lead to the eternalist opinion. For this reason it is said that ultimately transmigration is *nirvāṇa*. In other words the ultimate nature of phenomena is that they are "extinct" (i.e. in *nirvāṇa*, "extinction"). The same *sūtra* speaks of an ultimate unchanging reality, an "absolute" reality, which is identified with the nature of the Buddha and also with the doctrine of the Buddha, the "substance of the doctrine" (*dharmakāya*) of the Buddha. This is not born, does not transmigrate. It is permanent, fixed, safe, eternal. It is empty and pure. It is called the "embryo" (*garbha*) of the thus-gone, which is present in all phenomena, in all beings (is the possibility of their enlightenment); it is the embryo of the ultimate purity of phenomena. The *Ratnagotravibhāga*

51. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Chapter 25.

52. The Sanskrit original does not seem to be available: we have used the quotations in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, ed. Johnston, Bihar Research Society (Patna, 1950), pp. 12, 34, 46, 73, 76.

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(probably third century A.D., by a certain Sthiramati) systematizes the doctrine of this and some other contemporary *sūtras* as that they teach that there is an ultimate reality having several aspects. It is not a duality (*advaya*); therefore, there is no possibility of real action or real "defilement" (of streams of consciousness involved in transmigration). It has the nature of thought, pure and translucent. Enlightenment is seeing this translucent thought-nature. Since all beings share in it they have the knowledge of a thus-gone (here=a *buddha*), but they do not understand it. This is because of their incorrect thinking. The defilements are unreal imaginings. Ultimate reality is without imagining. This is idealism: the ultimate reality has the nature of thought, and everything else is the product of imagining. It seems to be the first statement of the popular medieval Indian doctrine that the world is an illusion, that all our unhappiness does not really exist, that ultimately everything is perfect and all we have to do is to think that it is so. We shall not here develop the theme of the possible usefulness of such ideas in a feudal society.

The distinctive feature of the Mantrayāna is ritual (*kriyā*). Just as the Śaivas in the medieval period proposed to set aside the ancient, abstract Vedic ritual in favour of that of their own richly decorative cult of the supreme being (Śiva), performed in magnificent temples and exploiting all the arts, so some Buddhists substituted a tangible, colourful, popular ritual for the old abstract meditations. The doctrine is to be acted out in tangible form instead of being simply understood. The apparently meaningless incantations (*mantras*), symbols (*mudrās*), diagrams (*maṇḍalas*—often living groups of participants) and consecrations (*abhiṣekas*) are mystical representations of the doctrine. It is not perhaps very clear why such a trend should appear at this particular period in history (the origins of the Mantrayāna seem datable to about the sixth century A.D., with anticipations of the use of incantations as early as the fourth century, the probable date of the *Ratnaketudhāriṇī* published among the Gilgit texts, which was translated into Chinese early in the fifth century). Philosophically, most Mantrayāna texts follow the Madhyamaka, so that the whole paraphernalia of the ritual and all the *buddhas, bodhisattvas* and gods and goddesses who join in the

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performances exist only at the concealing level; ultimately all are empty, and there is only *nirvāṇa* (the serious student is recommended just to imagine the performance, to make it a kind of meditation only, but this clearly is a secondary and later development). It would be premature to attempt to explain why it was now desirable to make the doctrine "visible" to living beings in order to attract them to it: that would presuppose a general study of the outlook of the people of this period. Part of the explanation may perhaps be sought in the history of the medieval temple, the main centre of the ritual and also the recipient of land grants. Possibly the ritual was useful in making a suitable impression on the inhabitants of the lands in possession of the temple—the magnificent temple which replaced the simple community of monks seeking peace of mind and justifying donations to them by their teaching of the way to happiness.

Mahāyāna Buddhism thus offered, from about the first century A.D. onwards, an ideal of benevolent lords in the form of *buddhas* and especially *bodhisattvas* (in whose names the word *īśvara*, "lord", often appears), which it was clearly desirable that the lords of this world, the kings and landowners, should emulate, with a corresponding ideal of submissive trust for those who hoped to be protected and made happy by them. Later, from the third century onwards (the theory was consolidated by Asanga in the fourth century), it could offer also idealism, that unhappiness is imaginary. Finally, from about the sixth century it developed interesting rituals to replace abstract meditation, or the passive thought of Amitābha, or the rather difficult exercise of imagining that unhappiness is imaginary and thinking oneself perfectly happy is the ultimate reality. Through ritual one could seek actively to realize supreme happiness and personal identity with the ultimate reality. Such ideals and attitudes, offered to the rulers and the ruled, may have contributed significantly to social harmony and stability in a developing feudal order.

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Material Milieu of Tantricism

R. S. Sharma

To the modern educated people tantricism means essentially orgiastic rites involving addiction to five *makāras, matsya* (fish), *māṃsa* (meat), *madya* (intoxicating drink), *maithuna* (sex) and *mudrā* (physical gestures), but it possessed many other important elements. Tantric texts and iconography gave a great importance to the cult of the mother goddess, which was confined not only to the Śākta system, but also appeared in a pronounced form in the Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Buddhist and Jain systems. It generally provided for the initiation of women and śūdras, irrespective of their varṇas. Sūdra teachers (*ācāryas*) could initiate śūdras and Caṇḍālas, and could perform certain sacrifices.

The tantras served an important social purpose by prescribing numerous rituals and remedies not only for the day-to-day diseases but also for snake-bites, mouse-bites, bites by poisonous insects, and injuries supposed to be caused by ghosts. Remedies were laid down for the protection of cereals against being eaten by mice and vermins. Rites and occult practices were supposed to avert the adverse effects of poison, planets and diseases, and drugs were to be administered accompanied by incantations. The medieval *tāntrika* also acted as physician and astrologer (*jyotiṣī*). The practice continues even now in Nepal and Mithila where the *tāntrika* foretells the future and the dates of eclipses and festivals.

Tantricism laid down numerous magical rituals to achieve liberation (*mukti*) and enjoyment (*bhukti*), and in fact to fulfil all kinds of the material desires *(kāmyāni)* of the people. According to a Vaiṣṇavite tantric text of about the sixth century A.D the

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tantra variety of Siddhānta is credited with the realization of the *caturvarga*[1], which obviously means wealth (*artha*), piety (*dharma*), sensual gratification (*kāma*) and liberation (*mokṣa*). Rituals provided for obtaining the elixir of life. Rites were laid down for turning earth and base metals into gold at a time when the yellow metal was scarce, for the paucity of gold coins in the four centuries following the fall of the Gupta empire is striking. Tantricism popularized *pūjā* and adopted *bhakti,* the doctrine of complete surrender to the god and the *guru* by making various offerings to them. It was institutionalized by means of temples which housed Śiva, Viṣṇu, Śakti, and many new folk divinities, by monastic organizations which gave the paramount place to the *guru* or the *ācārya,* and finally by a vast corpus of written literature which embodied the tantric traditions and practices. It was therefore in effect identical with Hinduism in medieval times. Its outlook was highly secular and materialistic, and no other sect was so close to the life of various classes of people as it was. This was perhaps the chief reason why it has had a long vogue in India, and in some ways survives even today. Stress on the symbolical and philosophical aspect of tantricism implies its restriction to a narrow circle of expert practitioners, but the contents of the published texts show that the greater portion is concerned with rituals and practices connected with the day-to-day, mundane life of the people.

Weber ascribes the origin of tantricism to the greed of the brāhmaṇas for fees which led them to offer their services for numerous folk deities, and to a sense of competition with Jainism and Buddhism.[2] Possibly the brāhmaṇas invented new means of livelihood, but by the time tantricism became a force in early medieval times Jainism and Buddhism had ceased to offer any serious challenge to brāhmaṇism. Some people assign psycho-sexual origins to tantricism, and others explain its rise and growth in purely spiritual and mystic terms. But why all this happens in

1. The *Hayaśīrṣa* quoted by V. S. Pathak, *Journal of the U.P. Historical Society,* xxiv-xxv (1951-52), 214. According to another view the *Hayaśīṣa-Pañcarātra* is ascribed to the eighth century. M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature,* Eng. tr. Subhadra Jha (Delhi, 1967), iii, pt. II, 614. fn. 1.

2. Max Weber, *The Religion of India* (Glencoe, Illinois, 1958), p. 297.

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medieval India has not been explained. In our opinion the origin and growth of tantricism can be better understood if we consider the material milieu of the country in the early Middle Ages.

A remarkable development of the early medieval period was land grants to priests and temples on a large scale. The distribution of land grants to brāhmaṇas indicates their advent in north Bengal in the fifth century, in east Bengal in the sixth century, in Assam in the fifth century and in Orissa in the seventh century. Frequent land donations to the brāhmaṇas in Gujarat began from the seventh century. About the same time they started receiving lands in the Kangra area, Chamba and the Himalayan state of Nepal.

The Vākāṭakas made numerous land donations to the brāhmaṇas in central and western Madhya Pradesh. Their contemporaries and some Gupta vassals donated lands to the brāhmaṇas in north-eastern Madhya Pradesh in the fourth and fifth centuries. But the south-eastern part of this state was brāhmaṇized for the first time between the sixth and the seventh centuries under the Nala, Pāṇḍava and Śarabhapurīya princes.[3]

In the upper Deccan, in Maharashtra, the Sātavāhanas started the practice of land grants to the Buddhists in the first century A.D. Then they turned their attention to Andhra and set up the Buddhist monastery at Nāgārjunikoṇḍa in the middle of the third century A.D. The plantation and patronage of the Buddhist monks in this tribal area was continued by the Ikṣvākus in the third and fourth centuries, and even in the period of decay Hsüan Tsang speaks of many monasteries in Andhra. Apparently the Buddhist establishments were maintained by land grants, of which we have two epigraphic examples in the beginning of the seventh century. The Buddhists brought to this area an advanced social order and culture which came into conflict with the backward culture of the Megalithic people. The eastern portion of Andhra was brāhmaṇized in the third and fourth centuries under the Ikṣvākus, Śālaṅkāyanas and Viṣṇukuṇḍins, but the western portion was brāhmaṇized from the fifth century. The western part of Mysore came under brāhmaṇical influence in the fifth-sixth centuries

3. All this can be inferred from M. G. Dikshit, *Introduction to Archaeological Remains in Madhya Pradesh* [in Hindi] (Sagar, 1954).

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under the brāhmaṇa dynasty of the Kadambas. But it was under the Cālukyas that brāhmaṇa settlements came to be distributed over the whole state in the sixth-eighth centuries.

Brāhmaṇas were introduced in large numbers into Tamil Nadu by the Coḷas from the eighth century, and, as land grants show, their settlements increased considerably in the ninth and tenth centuries. Although Śaṅkarācārya is placed in the beginning of the ninth century, land grants do not show large-scale brāhmaṇical settlements in Kerala until the tenth-eleventh centuries.

In the Coḷa dominions the existence of numerous villages dominated by the brāhmaṇas is attested by inscriptions, and also corroborated by the Saṃhitās belonging to both the Vaikhānasa and Pāñcarātra schools of Vaiṣṇavism. The Vaikhānasīya *Kāśyapa Saṃhita* asks the king to bestow on Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas a prosperous village which possesses all the necessary resources including labourers (*bhṛtyas*) and is free from the depredations of robbers and inimical elements.[4] The village is defined in this text as a habitation of the *vipras* and their *bhṛtyas*;[5] it is also called the *agrahāra* of the chief *vipras*.[6] Generally the Pāñcarātra texts contain chapters on the foundation of the village,[7] which is a necessary precondition for the construction of the temple. The establishment of shrines and temples has to be preceded by colonization and introduction of new methods of cultivation.

Except Tamil Nadu and Kerala, it was in the fifth-seventh centuries that large-scale land grants came to be made to the brāhmaṇas in the peripheral areas such as Assam, Bengal, Orissa, central India, Gujarat and the Deccan, and also in the Himalayan areas and Nepal. Inscriptions show that several brāhmaṇas were introduced as landed beneficiaries by a single charter. In the fifth century 1,000 brāhmaṇas were granted land in Maharashtra in one district and at one time by Pravarasena II.[8] In the first half

4. Ed. R. Parthasarathi Bhattachar, Sri Venkateśvara Oriental Series, no. 12 (Tirupati, 1948), Ch. xvii.

5. *viprāṇāṃ sabhṛtyānāṃ nivāsa grāma iti.* Ch. xiv.

6. Ibid.

7. *Pāñcarātraprasādaprasādhanam*, Chs. i-x of the "Kriyāpāda", *Pādmasaṃhitā*, ed. H. Daniel Smith (Madras, 1963), p. 16, fn. 1.

8. D. C. Sircar (ed.), *Select Inscriptions bearing on Indian History and Civilization* (University of Calcutta, 1965), no. 62, ll. 19-20.

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of the seventh century forty brāhmaṇas were twice endowed with lands in Gujarat. Two hundred and five brāhmaṇas were granted land in Assam in the same century. In *c.* A.D. 650 more than one hundred brāhmaṇas were assigned lands in the wild tracts of the Tipperah district of east Bengal. In the second half of the seventh century land grants were made in the Cuttack area of Orissa to twenty-three brāhmaṇas in one case and to twelve in another. A century later, in the Balasore district two hundred brāhmaṇas received lands.[9]

The brāhmaṇa immigrants to the east, west and south-west of their original home in mid-India, which was considered to have set the norm for the whole of the country, had to deal with people who were at different levels of culture. Some of them were semi-brāhmaṇized; others were completely tribal. In Bengal, Orissa, central India and the Deccan, for instance, the brāhmaṇas came into close contact with the Śabaras, who are mentioned in early medieval inscriptions and still inhabit parts of Orissa and the adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh. They came into contact with the Pulindas in Madhya Pradesh, where a sixth century charter mentions a land donor called Pulindabhaṭa, who may have been a tribal Pulinda improvised into a brāhmaṇa or a kṣatriya. We hear of a chief called Pulindarāja, who prevailed upon a Bhauma-kara ruler in Orissa (ninth century) to grant land for the maintenance of a Śaiva temple and Śaiva ascetics.[10]

The penetration of the brāhmaṇas into the tribal belts added enormously to the number of śūdras. Since the tribal people were given a low social rank, some spiritual compensation was necessary. According to the Vedic practice they could not undergo the *upanayana* initiation, could not perform sacrifices and recite the Vedic *mantras*. This religious situation had developed in Madhyadeśa where the śūdras mostly served as slaves, artisans and agricultural labourers. But agrarian expansion in the early Middle Ages under the aegis of the brāhmaṇas was accomplished through the efforts of the local people who were recruited as śūdras. Kauṭilya recommends the enlistment of śūdra cultivators

9. For more instances see B. P. Mazumdar, "Collective Landgrants in Early Medieval Inscriptions", *JAS*, x (1968), 7-17.

10. *JBORS*, xvi (1930), 81-82, 11.18-24.

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(*karṣakas*) for new settlements. For the first time śūdras as a class are mentioned as cultivators by Hsüan Tsang and the legal commentator Asahāya in the seventh century. They naturally came to have some rights and interests in the land in which brāhmaṇa and other beneficiaries enjoyed superior rights. This became inconsistent with the traditional ritual status of the śūdras which had to be raised by providing initiation for them in the tantric sects.

Women clearly enjoyed a higher status in the tribal belts where the cult of the mother goddess was widely prevalent. Since in the Sanskrit texts they were bracketed with the śūdras, it was only proper that their ritual status be also raised, and this was done by prescribing tantric initiation for them.

The cult of the mother goddess had prevailed in the country from a much earlier time, but only in the sixth century did it acquire an outstanding place in the literate, written traditions of the Buddhist and brāhmaṇical sects. The aboriginal mother goddesses came to be worshipped in the form of Śakti or Buddhist Tārā. Śāktism emerged as a religious factor in the sixth century and became a strong force from the ninth century.[11]

The names of the mother goddess in different areas reveal their aboriginal origin. The *Hevajra Tantra* (also called *Yoginī Tantra*), a Buddhist work of about the eighth century[12] composed possibly in Bengal, mentions such goddesses as Vetālī, Ghasmarī, Śavarī, Candālī and Ḍombinī.[13] Parṇaśavarī, clothed in leaves, was the goddess of the Śavaras who celebrated their festival *śavarotsava* in Bengal.[14] In a tantra text Śiva is called *śavara*.[15] The *Gauḍavaha* (vv. 285-347), a work of about the eighth century, identifies Vindhyavāsinī with Kālī or Pārvatī, and associates her with the Kols and the Śabaras.[16] The *Harivaṃśa* (II. iii.

11. J. N. Farquhar, *An Outline of Hindu Religious Literature* (Oxford, 1919), p. 167.

12. The *Hevajra Tantra*, pts. I & II, ed. D. L. Snellgrove (Oxford, 1959), I, viii. 14-15; iv. 10-11.

13. Ibid.

14. R. P. Chanda, *The Indo-Aryan Races*, pt. I (Rajshahi, 1916), p. 126.

15. H. P. Sastri, *A Catalogue of Palm-Leaf and Selected Paper Mss. Belonging to the Darbar Library*, Nepal (Calcutta, 1905), i, Preface, p. lxxv. The text is called *Siddhapañcāsikā*.

16. D. C. Sircar, "The Śākta Pīṭhas", *JRASB*, xiv (1948), 20, fn. I.

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7-8), a text of about the same time, adds that the goddess was worshipped by the Śabaras, Pulindas and Barbaras.[17] Śakti is known as Mātaṅgī, which shows that originally the goddess belonged to the Mātaṅga tribe. She is also called Caṇḍālī, which indicates that she was a goddess of the Caṇḍālas. According to the *Kulārṇava Tantra* a *caṇḍālī, carmakārī, māgadhī, pukkasī, śvapacī, khaṭṭakī, kaivartī, vaiśyayoṣitaḥ, śastrajīviṇī, kauñcikī* (or *kandukī*), *Śauṇḍikī, rañjakī, gāyakī, rajakī, śilpinī*, or *kaulikī*, who is initiated in *tantra, mantra, yoga* and *mudrā*, is a virgin, and observes the *samayācāra*, is to be worshipped as Śakti. If these are not available, the Śakti may belong to any of the four varṇas.[18] Obviously the list contains the names of mostly śūdra and untouchable women, generally of tribal origin.

The old matrilineal tribal belt has shrunk over the centuries, but even now according to O. R. Ehrenfels, matriarchal tribes and castes, numbering more than one hundred, are found in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Mysore and Kerala.[19] To this may be added small pockets in the tribal zone of eastern Madhya Pradesh, south Bihar and the neighbouring areas of Orissa and West Bengal. Thus the present distribution of matrilineal peoples supports the aboriginal origins of the cult of the mother goddess.

Though of earlier origin, only from the sixth century onwards were the shrines of the mother goddess accorded a regular place in the expanding, all-pervading brāhmaṇical tradition. Several *pīṭhas* of the mother goddess in Andhra were founded in early medieval times. At Tirupati the temple of Padmāvatī, which has tantric associations, was established some time earlier than the eighth century, to which belongs the famous Vaiṣṇavite Balaji temple of that town. What is further noteworthy, almost all temples of 64 yoginīs, manifesting the mother goddess in 64 forms, are found in the tribal belt of eastern Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. We know of five temples of 64 yoginīs, of which one is

17. Ibid.
18. Ed. Tārānātha Vidyāratna (London, 1917), vii. 42-46.
19. *Mother-Right in India* (Hyderabad, 1941), pp. 18-35, quoted in D. C. Sircar (ed.), *The Śakti Cult and Tārā* (University of Calcutta, 1967), p. 67.

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in Bheraghat near Jabalpur and another in Khajuraho; both were founded in the ninth century. A third is found near Sambalpur at Rampur in the former Patna (Bolangir) state in Orissa, and a fourth in Kalabandi in the same province.[20] A fifth temple is found at Dudhai in the Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh.[21] Apparently these temples were built in early medieval times to accommodate tribal goddesses.

Once the shrines of mother goddesses were established, attempts were made to give them a broad religious sanction in the literate Sanskrit texts, Buddhist and brāhmaṇical. The *Kubjikāmatatantra,* copied in the sixth-seventh centuries according to H. P. Sastri,[22] enumerates five *pīṭhas*: Uḍḍiyāna in Orissa, Jāla or Jalandhar in Panjab, Pūraṇa in Maharashtra, Mataṅga in Śrīśaila in Andhra, and Kāmākhyā in Assam.[23] The *Hevajra Tantra* mentions only four holy *pīṭhas,* which can be identified with Jalandhar, Uḍḍiyāna (in the Swat valley), Paurṇagiri and Kāmarūpa.[24] The list reappears with slight variations in the *Kālikā Purāṇa,* a work of about the tenth century and also in the almost contemporary Buddhist text *Sādhanamālā.*[25] Significantly enough, none of these earliest shrines was situated in mid-India.

The *Hevajra Tantra* mentions twenty-one other places as the meeting-ground of the yoginīs. These comprise three *upapīṭhas* called Mālava, Sindhu and Nagara; four *kṣetras* (fields) called Munmuni, Kāruṇyapāṭaka, Devīkoṭa and Karmārapāṭaka; four *upakṣetras* called Kulatā, Arbuda, Goḍ(d)āvarī and Himādri; four *chandohas* called Harikela, Lampāka, Kañcika and Saurastra; three *upachandohas* called Kaliṅga, the Isle of Gold and Kokaṇa or Kāṃkana; and three *pīlavas* called Caritra, Kosala and

20. J. N. Banerjea, *Paurāṇic and Tāntric Religion* (University of Calcutta, 1966), pp. 130-31.

21. Vidya Prakash, *Khajuraho* (Bombay, 1967), p. 11, fn. 4.

22. Op. cit., p. lxxviii.

23. Ibid. lxxx.

24. i. vii. 12; D. C. Sircar, *JRASB,* xiv (1948), 12-13. There is some controversy about the identification of Uḍḍiyāna. Some place it in Orissa, and others in the Swat valley; but whichever is correct it certainly lay outside Madhyadeśa.

25. D. C. Sircar, *JRASB,* xiv (1948), 12-13.

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Vindhyākaumārapaurikā.[26] The list may not be exhaustive and all the places may not be located, but most places associated by this eighth century text with the mother cult were certainly situated outside mid-India.

Some tantric texts can be clearly associated with particular tribes. This seems to be true of the *Mātaṅga-pārameśvara Tantra,*[27] which was evidently composed to serve the needs of the Mātaṅgas living in eastern Madhya Pradesh and Andhra. A *Śaiva* work called *Mātaṅga Āgama* existed in south India, and the temple of Mātaṅgeśvara was built at Mahabalipuram in the beginning of the eighth century. We know of certain Śavara tantras which contain *mantras* composed in dialects of regional languages,[28] evidently of late medieval times.

Almost all the tantric texts were composed in the outlying tribal areas. The *Jayākhya Saṃhitā,* although its manuscript was copied in 1187 in Nepal,[29] was written somewhere in western India in the fifth century. The *Kubjikāmatatantra* was copied in the late Gupta character of the sixth-seventh centuries in Nepal.[30] The *Niśvāsa Saṃhitā* was written in Nepal in the transitional Gupta character of the eighth century. The *Sarvajñānottara Tantra,* although a comparatively late work, possesses a fragmentary manuscript in Gupta script.[31] Although the manuscript of the *Hevajra Tantra* noticed by Bendall is dated A.D. 1200 and is in Bengali character, the *Yogaratnamālā,* a commentary on it noticed by H. P. Sastri,[32] was written in the transitional Gupta character, which naturally presupposes an earlier origin of that tantra, possibly eighth century. Several other tantra manuscripts from Nepal now preserved in the Vir Library were copied in the tenth-twelfth centuries. The *Pārameśvarī Tantra* was copied in 859,[33] and the *Saura Saṃhitā* in 941,[34] although it has two leaves

26. I. vii, 12-18.
27. H. P. Sastri, op. cit., p. lxviii. The ms. is in Nagari character, and is not old, Ibid. p. 219.
28. Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 23.
29. H. P. Sastri, op. cit., p. lxxvii.
30. Ibid. pp. lxxviii-lxxix.
31. Ibid. pp. lxxiv-lxxv.
32. Ibid. ii (Calcutta, 1915), Preface, pp. xii-xiii.
33. Ibid. i, Preface, p. lxxvii.
34. Ibid. p. lxxvi.

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stated to be in the Gupta script and giving several tantra formulas.[35] The *Kiraṇa Tantra* was copied in 924.[36] All these tantra manuscripts were prepared in Nepal well before the Muslim invasions of north-eastern India, and could not have been imports from northern India. They seem to have been composed in Nepal from about the sixth century when the brāhmaṇas and the brāhmaṇized Buddhist monks came into wide contact with the tribal people of the valley.

From Nepal tantric texts, especially the Buddhist ones, may have been taken to Tibet and China. Amoghavajra, a monk of north India and a brāhmaṇa, lived in China between 746 and 771 and translated seventy-seven works including several tantras.[37] Atīśa Dīpaṅkara had acquired proficiency in the four classes of tantras, and Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna looked after the tantric part of the Buddhist liturgy.[38]

The Buddhist Mantrayāna based on the tantras is said to have originated in Andhra in the sixth century.[39] The earliest Buddhist tantric texts, the *Guhyasamāja, Vajraśikhara, Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* and *Mahāvairocana* are attributed to the sixth and seventh centuries, and because of their traditional association with Nāgārjuna and Nāgabodhi and the south assigned to Andhra or Kaliṅga.[40] Obviously the ground for the rise of Mahāyāna and subsequently the tantras was prepared by the plantation of the Buddhist monks in the Guntur district by the later Sātavāhaṇas and the Ikṣvākus.

From Andhra and Kaliṅga the Buddhist tantras spread to Vaṅga and Magadha where Nalanda developed as a centre of their study in the reign of the Pālas.[41] According to the tradition in this area they were handed down in the most

35. Ibid.
36. Ibid. ii, 99. It tries to regulate the whole life of the people. It deals with purification, expiation, diet, seats and consecration of temples and images (Ibid. Preface, p. xxiv).
37. Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 21, fn. 11.
38. Ibid. p. 21.
39. A. K. Warder, *Indian Buddhism* (Delhi, 1970), p. 485.
40. Ibid. p. 487.
41. Ibid. p. 488.

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secret manner up to the time of Dharmakīrti (600-15).[42] But it was only in the eighth-twelfth centuries, possibly in its later half,[43] that the Siddhas called Saraha, Luipā, Kambala, Padmavajra, Kṛṣṇācārya, Lalitavajra, Gambhīravajra and Piṭo popularized the Sahajayāna tantricism.[44] Manuscripts of the *Kulārṇavatantra* have been recovered from north and east Bengal, and the Kaula practices survive in Mithila down to our times. The nine Nāthas are thought to be the authors of the Kaula tantras. A manuscript copy of the *Mahākaulajñāna-viniṛṇaya,* taken to Nepal by Matsyendranātha, has been found in about the same type of the transitional Gupta script as found in the Cambridge University Library manuscript of the *Pārameśvarī Tantra* copied in 859. The work is said to be *candradvīpavinirgata,* which means that it came from Candradvīpa in Backerganj in east Bengal.[45]

Several Sanskrit tantric texts in Oriya script are found in medieval Orissa,[46] and two of these, the *Kaulacūḍāmaṇi* and the *Vārāhī Tantra,* can be ascribed to the ninth-tenth centuries.[47] A manuscript called *Vajrayoginīsādhana* of the Sahajayāna school, although copied in Nepal in 1154, contains rituals recommended by Indrabhūti, a king of Orissa. Tantricism was not introduced into Kashmir until the eighth century, and its literature flourished there from the tenth century.[48] The most famous author was Abhinavagupta, whose family had migrated 250 years ago from Kānyakubja to Kashmir where it was granted a big *jāgir.*[49] He wrote a comprehensive treatise called the *Tantrāloka,* which systematically presents the teachings of the Kula and Trika systems. He seems to have been very much influenced by his Kaulika

42. Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 21, fn. 12.

43. P. C. Bagchi, *Studies in the Tantras* (Calcutta University, 1939), p. 74.

44. Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 21, fn. 15; Warder, op. cit., p. 488.

45. H. P. Sastri, op. cit., ii, Preface, pp. xviii-xix.

46. J. N. Banerjea, op. cit., pp. 130-31. A manuscript of this tantra, which belongs to the southern school, is preserved in the Durbar Library of Nepal (H. P. Sastri, op. cit., ii, 186).

47. H. P. Sastri, op. cit., ii, Preface, p. xii.

48. K. C. Pandey, *Abhinavagupta—An Historical and Philosophical Study* (Chowkhamba, Benaras, 1935), p. 85.

49. Ibid. p. 4.

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teacher Śambhunātha, from whom he learnt Kaulika texts and rituals at Jalandhar.[50]

A few tantric texts under the Jain influence were compiled in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore during the early medieval period. The *Samaraicchakahā* by Haribhadra Sūri in Gujarat around the eighth century is saturated with tantric ideas and practices. The *Jvālinī Kalpa* by Indramaṇi was completed in 939 at Mānyakheṭa although the cult was started earlier by a tantric teacher of the Draviḍa monastic sect in the Chamrajnagar taluk of the Mysore district.[51] Similarly the *Bhairava Padmāvatī Kalpa*, another tantric text, was compiled in Mysore by a Jain monk in 1047.[52]

In addition to these Jain tantric texts twenty-eight *Āgamas*, both Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite, were composed in south India in early medieval times, especially after the eighth century, and were used by the followers of the tantric texts in constructing temples, installing images and conducting worship. The Śaiva Āgamas are mentioned in a Pallava inscription[53] in the Kailāśa-nātha temple which was built in the eighth century. According to T. Gopinath Rao[54] the *Uttara-Kāraṇāgama* of the Śaivas along with some other Śaiva Āgamas prescribes the recitation of some Drāviḍa Vedas or hymns composed by a few Śaiva poets, the last of whom belonged to the ninth century. A Kashmir Śaiva poet, who flourished towards the end of the ninth century, refers to two Tamil Śaiva works of the same period.[55]

Of the Vaiṣṇava Āgamas, popularly known as the Saṃhitās, the prose version of the *Vaikhānasāgama* seems to be the oldest;[56] its metrical version ordains that the Drāviḍa Vedas, the *Prabañ-*

50. Ibid. p. 10.
51. R. N. Nandi, "Social and Religious Developments in the Deccan" [C. A.D. 600-1000] (Ph. D. thesis, Patna University, 1969), pp. 454-56.
52. Ibid. p. 460.
53. Hultzsch, *South Indian Inscriptions*, i, no. 24, verse, 5; no. 25 (36, 37) quoted in Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 20. Chakravarty wrongly ascribes the inscription to the sixth century.
54. *Elements of Hindu Iconography* (Madras, 1914), i, pt. I, Intro., 55-56.
55. J. N. Farquhar, op. cit., pp. 193-94.
56. T. Gopinath Rao, op. cit., p. 56.

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dhas of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas or Aḷvars (eighth-ninth centuries), should be sung in front of the divine processions.[57] Some Pāñcarātra texts such as the *Ahirbudhnya, Jayākhya* and *Sāttvata* were composed between the fifth and the ninth centuries probably in northern and western India, but they mainly circulated in south India.[58]

Thus early tantric texts are chiefly found in Kashmir, Nepal, Bengal, Assam, Orissa, and in western and south India, although their number in Mithila is not inconsiderable. It may be argued that climatic and political factors explain their preservation from early medieval times. But the tantras continued to be composed in these regions down to the eighteenth century and even later. In late medieval times most authors belonged to Bengal, quite a few belonged to Maharashtra and south India, some belonged to Orissa, Kashmir, Kumaon and Nepal, but the number of those who belonged to Varanasi was limited.[59] We may add that tantric survivals are more noticeable in the peripheral areas than in Āryāvarta or Madhyadeśa, which was the heart of brāhmaṇism. On account of the conversion of the majority of the people of north-western India (now Pakistan) to Islam, tantric practices have practically disappeared in that area, but this is not true of the neighbouring Himalayan areas in eastern Panjab and U.P. Of 108 *pīṭhas* mentioned in the works of the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, those which can be identified lie mostly outside Madhyadeśa. Hence tantric texts and practices survive precisely in the regions where they originated.

Therefore the problem of the origin of tantricism can be looked at from different angles: acculturation of the peripheral areas through land grants to the monks and brāhmaṇas, the aboriginal background of the tantric mother goddesses, the antiquity and distribution of the *pīṭhas,* the association of the Śabaras, Mātaṅgas, etc., with the different tantras, the dates and pro-

57. Ibid. p. 57.

58. M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, tr. R. C. Pandeya [in Hindi] (Delhi, 1966), i, pt. I, 246-48. Earlier we have indicated the place of the origin of the *Jayākhya Saṃhitā*. Schrader assigns the *Ahirbudhnya Saṃhitā* to Kashmir, much later after the fourth century (Winternitz, op. cit., p. 247, fns. 1 & 2).

59. This is based on Chapter ix of Chakravarty, op. cit.

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venance of the tantric texts, and finally the survivals of tantricism. All these considerations lead to the single conclusion that this religion originated in the outer, tribal circle and not in Madhyadeśa. Of course a few Western scholars[60] look for non-Indian sources of tantricism, as they do for some other aspects of Indian culture, but this survey does not provide any basis for such a supposition.

Winternitz thinks that "the Tantras and the curious excrescences and degenerations of religion described in them are not drawn from popular belief or from popular traditions either of the aboriginal inhabitants or of the Aryan immigrants, but they are the pseudo-scientific productions of theologians . . .".[61] While the efforts of the priests to invent gainful rituals cannot be discounted, the close connection of tantricism with aboriginal areas, tribes, and goddesses cannot be ignored. The mystic diagrams (*yantras*) and the sacred circles (*cakras*) invented by the *śāktas*, and the different *maṇḍala krama* rituals observed by the tantric worshippers, possibly continued the veneration of stone tools and weapons as cult symbols, which were often associated with fertility rites.[62]

Sexual intercourse is considered to be one of the worst rituals of tantricism, but among primitive peoples in India and outside sexual rites formed an important part of their agricultural magic. These were believed to promote the fertility of the earth and the prosperity of the people. Since agriculture originally lay in the province of women, such rites originated and exclusively developed in their hands.[63] Unfortunately tantricism was seized

60. B. Spooner and Hodgson hold such a view (Ibid. p. 47). James Needham suggests some connection between the erotic-sensual element in Chinese ritualism and the tantric religion of India, on the basis of which J. N. Banerjea (op. cit., p. 132) looks for Chinese influence in tantric eroticism.

61. A *History of Indian Literature* (Second edn, Calcutta University), i, pt. II, 531.

62. D. K. Chakravarty, "The Antiquity and the Evolution of the Saptamātṛka Worship in Bengal", *Proceedings of the Bhagalpur Session of the Indian History Congress* (1968), p. 129.

63. Relevant references collected by N. N. Bhattacharya appear in D. C. Sircar (ed.), *The Śakti Cult and Tārā*, pp. 68-69, 143-46.

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by members of leisured upper classes, and distorted to provide them sexual and sensual gratifications. The erotic sculptures at Khajuraho and Konarak are a very costly affair, and could be afforded only by princes, chiefs and landlords.

Of course the same variety of tantricism is not found in all the areas. In Magadha, Orissa, Bengal, Assam and Nepal the existing Buddhist background gave rise to the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna tantricism. Buddhist tantras possibly originated in Andhra, modified the hierarchical Mahāyāna Buddhism in favour of women and the lower orders, and spread to other areas. In parts of Madhya Pradesh, where numerous Vaiṣṇava antiquities and images of mother goddesses have been found from Gupta times, tantricism assumed the form of Pāñcarātra and transformed Vaiṣṇavism by introducing the mother goddess into this religion. This also possibly happened later in Andhra and Tamil Nadu. In the semi-Hindu areas of Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra and Tamil Nadu, the existing religion of Śaivism was infected with tantricism, which also affected Jainism in Mysore, Maharashtra and Gujarat. None of these areas was sufficiently brāhmaṇized or feudalized till the sixth century. Tantricism therefore was the ultimate product of the brāhmaṇical colonization of the tribal area through the process of land grants. Land grants gave rise to not only serfdom in the outer circle[64] but also to *bhakti* and tantricism, all of which eventually penetrated Madhyadeśa.

The confrontation between the brāhmaṇa beneficiaries and the tribal people created social and economic problems which were partly solved through tantricism. On the one hand the new religion welcomed in its ranks women, śūdras and the incoming aborigines; on the other it recognized the existing social and feudal hierarchy. Therefore it was acceptable to all sections of people. It was a religious attempt at social reconciliation and integration rather than at the accentuation of the social conflict. Even the Buddhist *saṃgha* closed its doors to slaves and debtors, but the tantric *cakra* opened its doors to all sections of people irrespective of varṇa, sex and other considerations.

64. R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism: c. 300-1200* (University of Calcutta, 1965), pp. 53-59.

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Origin and Nature of Śaivite Monasticism : The Case of Kālāmukhas

R. N. Nandi

The Kālāmukhas were an important Śaivite sect which originated in Mysore from the larger and more ancient body of the Lakulīśa Pāśupatas in the eighth century and spread to Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the ninth-tenth centuries.[1] They founded the first ever communities of professional monks and tried to reorganize the Śaivite priesthood of south India on the basis of medieval temple worship and *bhakti* propaganda. The attempt formed part of the general reorganization of old brāhmaṇical sects and was necessitated by the rivalry of the orthodox Smārtas and the heterodox Jains. The success of the effort is evident from the increasing number of Śaivite temples and monasteries as also from the delimitation of the spheres of Jain influence.

The Smārtas not only rejected as impious action all profitable medieval religious practices such as temple worship, ablutions and ritual charity, but also pleaded with the community for the social exclusion of all officiants in temples and at popular ceremonies. Manu and Viṣṇu deny to these priests the right of

1. For Nāyanār Śaivite monasteries see C. V. N. Ayyar, *Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India* (Madras, 1936), pp. 134, 235. These were small houses where the preceptor lived and received his disciples. The disciples were, however, not organized into professional communities of monks, nor were they in habitual residence at the convent, as were the Kālāmukhas.

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admission at the ritual of manes (*śrāddha*).[2] Uśanas is particularly severe on the temple priests, including the Pāśupatas and Pāñcarātas, and brands them as wicked people.[3] This denial of a *locus standi* in the society needed to be countered as is evident from the propaganda of different Śaivite sects. The hymns of the Tamil Nāyanārs militate against the Smārta rejection of the temple priesthood; Tirumular is explicit in stating that the patronage of the Śaivite worshippers is far more meritorious than the charities performed in relation to crores of sacrificing brāhmaṇas.[4] The Kālāmukhas who followed the Nāyanārs in the reorganization of the Śaivite cults and priesthood were also conscious of the Smārta dislike of medieval temple worship and priests.[5]

The Śaivite monkhood was partly an overgrowth of the *bhakti* ideology which encouraged the congregations of hymners and choir-singers led by a choir leader, as among the Nāyanārs and Āḷvārs. From the ninth century the Nāyanār devotees slowly melted into the Śaivite monastic orders and from the close of the eleventh century the Āḷvārs dissolved into the monastic orders of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas. Consequently the first Śaivite monasteries appeared in the early ninth century in Tamil Nadu[6] and Mysore with the Kālāmukhas and Pāśupatas as pioneers.

The monasteries and temples served as the institutional basis of the *bhakti* concept which encouraged the doctrine of servi-

2. *Manusmṛti*, iii. 151, and *Viṣṇusmṛti*, lxxxii, 8-9, state that the priests who officiate at popular sacrifices (*gaṇahoma*) are unfit for invitation at the *śrāddha;* for royal patronage of these priests see *EI*, xxvi, no. 21, fn. 4. Manu further indicts the temple priests (vii, 92 cited in A. Barth, *Religion of India*, first Indian edn, 1969, pp. 98-99).

3. The words used by Uśanas are *vṛtakas* and *pāṣaṇḍis, Uśanaś Saṃhitā*, ch. iv. vv. 23-26, cited in Ayyar, op. cit., p. 21.

4. *Tirumandiram*, stanza 112 cited in Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 281-82.

5. *SII*, xv, no. 73, II. 16-26. Lorenzen, *The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas* (Delhi, 1972), p. 133, refers to scholarly brāhmaṇas who folded their hands in adoration to Śiva at the site of great fire rituals performed at the installation ceremony of a phallic Śiva.

6. The early *Tevāram* hymners give explicit references to the existence of Śaivite monasteries, Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 134, 235. Inscriptional evidence regarding Śaivite monasteries is available from the ninth century, *SII*, xii, no. 58.

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tude, of unstinted loyalty and unpaid labour to an absolute superior. In monastic parlance, the absolute superior was the pontiff who enjoyed unquestioned authority in relation to the property and retinue of his establishment. The slave attitude (*dāsatva*) of the *bhakti* ideology was especially relevant to the monastic communities[7] inasmuch as it provided a basis of relationship between the monastic superior and the subordinate staff, particularly the ryots and essential artificers attached to the temple or monastic estate. The Nāyanārs used the *dāsatva* sentiment with profit and obliged the low-born to render compulsory service to the Nāyanār priesthood.[8] The Kālāmukhas also held fast to the *dāsatva* tradition in order to secure wage-free and hereditary labour of certain essential artisans and menials, whose services were permanently transferred to the temple or the monastery.[9]

The sectarian challenge and social affront offered by medieval Jainism to the Śaivite sects also account for the origin and diffusion of the Kālāmukha monkhood. The nature of medieval Jainism had changed substantially owing to the multiplication of monasteries and growth of monastic landlordism which seriously undermined the social basis of Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite sects. Royal and private charters registering land grants and, in places, control over local tolls[10] raised the Jain pontiff almost to the position of a local landlord. These resources enabled him to organize the fourfold charity in food, medicine, education and residence on a large scale, and thereby consolidate the social basis

7. See Tirumular's exposition of the slave attitude, Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 260-61.

8. None of the śūdra and untouchable Nāyanārs is permitted to perform any jobs other than those prescribed for his caste, Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 122-203. The test of a śūdra Nāyanār's devotion consisted in his doing selfless service to the priests.

9. *EI*, iv, no. 50. A.D. 975; *EI*, iii, no. 40, A.D. 1008; *EC*, vii, *Sk.* 20A, A.D. 1032; *EC*, xi, *Dg* 20. A.D. 1045. The descendants of these artisans, however, take pride in their age-old association with the temple and claim on the basis of it a social status higher than that enjoyed by other artisans of the same trade.

10. For gift of freehold fields and villages see *IA*, xi, no. cxx(b), A.D. 567-68; *EI*, xxxvi, no. 12, A.D. 962; *EC*, xi, *Cd.* 74, A.D. 968. For choultry see *KI*, i, no. 3, 11. 1-14, A.D. 750. For rice fields, orchards, residential quarters, oil-mills, see *SII*, xi, pt. I, no. 150. A.D. 1081.

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of the sect in the locality. Charity, however, was meant for the Jain believers. Members of non-Jain sects were carefully excluded from the enjoyment of monastic benefactions.[11] Even the Jain laity was strongly advised against entertaining the non-believers.[12] The development, therefore, was materially disadvantageous to the non-Jain sects, which, in the absence of parallel monastic institutions,[13] could not win much local support. In such a situation these sects could either dislodge the Jains from the spheres of their influence by a show of violence or establish similar monastic institutions to contain the Jain challenge. Both the methods were tried with considerable success at different periods of the Śaivite movement in the peninsula.

The Kālāmukha attitude towards family and women was guided by considerations of sectarian rivalry. The Jain practice of inducting women as nuns prompted the Kālāmukha orders to admit women as full members of the church.[14] In some areas they even went to the extent of waiving celibacy as a pre-condition of monkhood, thereby administering a powerful blow to the Jain orders for which celibacy was indispensable. The preceptors who led the Kālāmukha monks of Belur were all married, as a result of which the Belur pontificate became hereditary.[15] The Kālāmukhas' respect for family ties is em-

11. The *Yaśastilaka* emphasizes that all charity practised in respect of non-Jains leads only to evil consequences. See K. K. Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture* (Sholapur, 1949), p. 331.

12. A *Periya Purāṇa* story of pre-Apparian days informs that the Jain householder of Tiruvārrur refused alms of clarified butter asked for by a Śaiva mendicant. The latter was insulted and ridiculed by the householder. See Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 173-74.

13. The earliest monasteries of the Śaivites belong to the eighth century. These are Kālāmukha and Pāśupata monasteries of Mysore. The Vaiṣṇava monasteries are later than the Śaivite monasteries.

14. *EC*, v, no. 62. Besides this inscription the sources do not indicate the existence of regular orders of Kālāmukha nuns, nor do they mention anything about the status and functions of individual nuns.

15. *EC*, v, Belur 117, 176, A.D. 1136. The record refers to a family of Kālāmukha monks who belonged to the Parvatāvalī subdivision of the Śakti Pariṣad. The son of Iśānaśakti was Iśānaśakti Bratīndram who begot a daughter on his loving wife Vāṇī. This daughter gave birth to Devendra Paṇḍita who begot his son Kalyāṇaśakti on his wife Vāṇī II.

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phasized by copious references to the wives of the monks and preceptors. All this indicates that the Kālāmukhas were trying to strike an effective compromise between the householders' life and the monks' life. They wanted to emphasize that the monastic pursuit did not amount to any negation of family relationship, much less to self-abnegation, as preached by their Jain rivals.

The monastic movement of the Śaivites, spearheaded by the Kālāmukhas of Mysore, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, bears close relation to the changing political structure. The earlier monasteries were modest houses of mendicant groups which organized theological and sectarian teaching besides practising various monastic virtues. But slowly the character of monastic foundations changed, and from the close of the tenth century the institutions developed as degenerate private organizations dominated by certain families of priests on a permanent, hereditary basis. These families were not only big owners of landed estates, but also exercised considerable influence over a vast cross-section of the subject population which owed spiritual allegiance to the Śaivite pontificate and priesthood. The social control wielded by these religious orders was appreciated by the great feudatory houses of Mysore and Andhra Pradesh, although in Tamil Nadu the centralized and powerful Cola state considered the monasteries to be their rivals.[16] The sub-kings and feudatories found it politically expedient to promote the monastic organization because the religious subordination of the masses helped the rulers to perpetuate their political authority. This explains the phenomenal rise in the number of monastic endowments in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In Mysore alone over a hundred donations were recorded between 1050 and 1230, the donors being all kings and feudatories. Out of these one hundred nearly 70 gifts were made by feudal lords and high officers, which shows

16. In Tamil Nadu the lion's share of endowments was enjoyed by the big temples, although a few monasteries did receive occasional favour. The monasteries became powerful only after the Śrīvaiṣṇava reorganization of monastic foundations.

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the special relation in which the feudal bureaucracy stood to the Śaivite church.

The growth of an understanding between the Śaivite church and the feudal administration is suggested by the form and terminology of the charters of donation. The records illustrate that the donors submitted to the ecclesiastical chief just as the vassal submitted to his lord superior, anticipating favour and security of office in return. The presents of land, money, gold and cows which the sub-king or the feudatory made to the pontiff were in the nature of a tribute paid to a higher authority. The donors are invariably described as "loving" or "washing" the feet of the donee while making their charities.[17] The description is similar to the one which refers to the vassals as offering worship or homage to the sovereign.[18] In the earlier records, dealing with gifts of land to priests and temples, the king is never referred to as subordinate to the beneficiary. Further, in most grants relating to monastic endowments the recipient of gifts is styled as the supreme lord of the world, as the commander of all kings, and also as one at whose feet all monarchs rubbed their heads.[19] This subservience of the secular authority to religious authority is a characteristic of feudal relationship which is not met with in earlier official documents registering gifts of land to priests and temples.

The formation of an axis between the feudal state and the Śaivite church is also borne out by inscriptions which show that the head of the monastery is invariably the chief adviser (*rājaguru*)[20] of the administration. The *rājaguru*, who administered the church and advised the ruling chief on major policy decisions, was more than a substitute for the earlier royal chaplain, who merely assisted the kings in the performance of domestic and public rituals and whose following included a handful of temple priests. That the combination of priests and rulers aimed at the effective control of the subject population is

17. *EC*, vii, *Sk.* 123; *EI.* v, no. 25 A—D; *KI*, iv, no. 13; *EC*, vii, no. 316. The Kannada term used in these inscriptions is *Kaḷam kaḷci.*
18. *EI*, v, no. 4, v. 4.
19. *EC*, vii, *Sk.* 103, 105, 123; *EI*, xv, no. 9 F—I; *EI*, v, no. 25 A—E.
20. *EI*, xxiii, no. 25; *EC*, vii, *Sk.* 92, 105, 123; *EI*, v, no. 25.

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also evident from the involvement of priests in the executive service of the state and from the increasing appropriation of the feudal offices by the select families of brāhmaṇas. In 1099 the district governor of Bellary, who was also the chief of the *mahājana* council, is described as the working priest of a temple[21] situated in the same district. The capture of the executive ranks by priestly families is further demonstrated by the Ablur records[22] of the eleventh-twelfth centuries. The charters refer to the families of Gujarati brāhmaṇas who migrated to Mysore during the reign of the Cālukya Vikramāditya VI. Anantapāla, the leader of the immigrant families, was favoured by the Cālukya king with the high office of the *mahāsāmantādhipati* and the title of *pañcamahāśabda* in 1102. Anantapāla, whose fiscal and administrative control extended over a vast area comprising Banavasi, Purigere and Belvola, delegated his powers to subordinate officers and administrators, all of whom were his kinsmen. This is how large feudal principalities passed under the control of priestly families, which also turned out to be the most effective patrons of the monastic foundations and the attached temples. It may be observed that seven out of the 10 major donations made to the temples and monasteries of Ablur were registered by the administrator-members of Anantapāla's family.[23] Of these seven gifts five were made between 1101 and 1114 by the members of Anantapāla's family who were administering different parts of the Dharwar and Belgaum districts.

In origin and nature the Kālāmukhas of Mysore were closely related to the earlier Nāyanārs of Tamil Nadu and the later Vīraśaivas of Mysore.[24] The three sects, although widely separated by time and space, marked three distinct phases

21. *SII*, ix, pt. i, no. 165 cited in Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 155.

22. *EI*, v, no. 25 A—B.

23. Ibid.

24. Each sect was organized on the basis of Śaivite temple worship and monastic preaching of Śaivite doctrines; each was founded by a group of brāhmaṇas, each showed its dislike of Smārta orthodoxy and Jain heterodoxy and each accepted *bhakti* as the ideological foundation of its particular system.

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of the Śaivite movement of south India, dominated by anti-Jain feelings. The first period (*c.* A.D. 500-800) is marked by a militant profession of the cult of devotion (*bhakti*) by the Nāyanār hymners of Tamil Nadu.[25] The "bone-melting songs" of these poets inspired mass response in favour of the new faith. The conversion of Sundara Pāṇḍya and Mahendra Pallava from Jainism to Śaivism gave a new dimension to the Nāyanār movement resulting in large-scale and bitter persecution of the Jains. Many of the persecuted migrated to Sravana Belgola and other Jain strongholds in Mysore.[26] Consequently, Jain influence in the deep south was reduced to insignificance.

The violent anti-Jain activity of the Śaivas is also suggested by the Lakulīśa icons of about the same period. These images belong to the sixth-seventh centuries when the Nāyanār movement was at its height. The saint is sculptured as holding a stout club in firm grip. The grip is suggestive, inasmuch as it indicates militant action which was in tune with the necessity of the advocates of neo-Śaivism in south India. In sharp contrast are the Lakulīśa images of Orissa and Bengal. In these regions the Śaivites did not have to meet the challenge of Jainism. Hence the sage is represented as a peaceful preacher seated under a trefoil arch in *vaddhapadmāsana* position on a double-petalled lotus.[27] The hands are in the *dharma cakra pravartana* posture reminding the onlooker of the great miracle of Śrāvastī performed by the Buddha. More instructive is the club which, loosely held round the arm, is in a state of rest indicating inaction.

The wave of sectarian violence spread, following a diagonal course, from the north-eastern districts of Tamil Nadu to the north-western districts of Mysore in the eleventh-twelfth centuries. About this time the Coḷa invaders, and following their example the Vīraśaivas launched an offensive against the

25. The Nāyanār stories frequently refer to instances of sectarian violence such as arson, killing, demolition of temples and so forth, see C. V. N. Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 144, 147, 149, 156, 172-73, 175, 183, 336, etc.

26. *EC*, ii, no. 21, refers to a monk who migrated from Madurai (*dakṣiṇa madhura*) to Sravana Belgola about A.D. 700.

27. The figures belong to the ninth-tenth centuries. J. N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography* (Calcutta, 1941), p. 480.

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Jains. Records speak how the Coḷa kings, setting foot on the Belgola country, burned down numerous temples including some at the famous Sravana Belgola.[28] The Coḷas taxed the Jain population for the maintenance of their army[29] and imposed punitive levy on the Jain monasteries.[30] A little later the Vīraśaivas are seen on rampage. Patronized by the Kalacuri king Bijjala, they demolished Jain temples, broke the images and drove the Jains away. The Nāyanār and Vīraśaiva movements were identical in nature and outcome. Both used political patronage to discredit the Jains and both displayed greater faith in violence than in preaching as a means to achieve sectarian supremacy. Both succeeded in eliminating the Jains from the field of sectarian competition, the Nāyanārs in Tamil Nadu and the Vīraśaivas in Mysore.

The Kālāmukha movement intervenes between these two militant Śaivite agitations and forms a major link in the sequence of a socio-religious upsurge which swept the peninsula for about six centuries. The Kālāmukhas began where the Nāyanārs ended[31] and the Vīraśaivas began where the Kālāmukhas ended. The mission of each sect consisted in the stabilization of the brāhmaṇical social order, dominated by the plebeian temple priests, against the onslaught of the Jains. Significantly, each system, although founded by groups of enterprising brāhmaṇas, made peripheral status concessions to non-brāhmaṇas by honouring some among them as enlightened members of their particular castes. This was done with the avowed purpose of developing a powerful supporting laity comprising wealthy merchants, high

28. *EI*, xv, no. 43, vv. 13-14, 20; *EC*, xi, *Bn.* 108.

29. *EC*, x, Mulbagal, 49a, 86(tr.)

30. *EI*, xv, no. 23, v. 21.

31. In point of time there is a link between the two movements. The Kālāmukhas appeared in the ninth century when the important phase of the Nāyanār movement had passed. Secondly, the Nāyanārs named some of their important temples after Kāyāvarohana (Kāroṇam in Tamil) which was the birth-place of Lakulīśa, the founder-teacher of the Kālāmukhas, see T. A. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, i (Madras, 1916), 19 and M. A. Dorai Rangaswamy, *Religion and Philosophy of Tevāram* (Madras, 1958), p. 393. Lastly, both the Nāyanārs and the Kālāmukhas derived their origin from the *āgamānta*.

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officers, essential artisans and menials, without, however, conceding to them any of the social privileges and material benefits enjoyed by the priestly hierarchy. Even the principle of monastic brotherhood was intended more as an antidote to the Jain concept of monastic fraternity than as a rule of normal monastic behaviour. By feigning to admit the low-born into their ranks and to treat them on a par with the higher groups, the sects wanted to take away the edge from the Jain propaganda that only Jainism stood for a society of equals. In practice, however, the śūdra Nāyanārs continued to suffer, as ever, from social disabilities,[32] while the Kālāmukhas admitted only some high śūdras as "lay" members of the community.[33]

The task of reorganizing the Śaivite priesthood and cult, undertaken by the Nāyanārs and the Kālāmukhas, was continued by the Vīraśaivas who originated from the powerful priestly orders of the Kālāmukhas operating in different districts of north-western Mysore, particularly Belgaum, Bijapur, Dharwar and Shimoga. The emergence of the Vīraśaivas marked the rise of the Jaṅgama priesthood which succeeded to the office and authority of the earlier Kālāmukha priests and monks; it also coincided with the private worship of phallic emblems of Śiva, which largely replaced the widespread public worship of images in the Kālāmukha temples.

The founder-leader of the Vīraśaiva sect was Ekānta Rāma, a brāhmaṇa of the Śrīvatsa *gotra*. Around 1200 he set out on a preaching mission propagating a new faith and collecting followers. He went to Huligère which was a powerful centre of the Śaivite monks. From there he went to Ablur where he started living with the inmates of the Brahmeśvara temple, a Kālāmukha establishment. The Kālāmukhas of Ablur found in him an able leader, at a time when they were suffering from loss of patronage. This is apparent from the fact that although they received as many as 10 donations between 1101 and 1144, not a single charity was registered between 1144 and 1200.[34] In 1200 the

32. Ayyar, op. cit., pp. 122-208.
33. *EC*, vii, *Sk.* 112.
34. *EI*, v, no. 25 A—E.

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Śaivites of Ablur reasserted themselves, not under the Kālāmukhas, but under Ekānta, the Vīraśaiva missionary whom the Kālāmukhas appear to have acknowledged as their new leader.

The Ablur charter which narrates the adventures of Ekānta shows how the local Kālāmukhas fused with or were converted into Vīraśaivas. The divine command which advised Ekānta Rāma to go to Ablur and live there with ease[35] is meaningful. It refers to the understanding of the Vīraśaiva leader that Ablur being a powerful centre of the Kālāmukhas, who had of late fallen on evil days, was the best place for the activities of a militant reformer. The reception accorded to him by the Kālāmukhas of Ablur[36] shows that Ekānta had taken a correct decision. That the preacher considered the local Kālāmukha monks as his co-sectaries and their god as his patron deity is evident from the fact that he rebuked the Jains who assembled at the Brahmeśvara temple to sing in honour of the Jina and to ridicule the Śaivas. He warned that it was forbidden to praise any other deity in the proximity of Śiva.[37] The Kālāmukhas, who ably supported Ekānta in his tirade against the Jains of Ablur, are referred to as attendants of Śaṅkara, who were delighted when Ekānta, taking up the challenge of the Jains, cut off his own head.[38] The conversion of Kālāmukha monasteries into powerful institutions of the Vīraśaivas[39] also emphasizes the fact that in Mysore the cult of Kālāmukhas served as the cradle of Vīraśaivism.[40]

In sum, the Kālāmukhas were an important Śaivite sect which originated in Mysore in the eighth century and spread to Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the ninth-tenth centuries. They

35. Ibid. no. 25E, l. 27.
36. Ibid. l. 33.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid. l. 38.
39. K. K. Handiqui, op. cit., p. 350.
40. It may be noted in passing that Huligere, where the Vīraśaiva doctrines were preached and Ablur, where the Vīraśaiva sect originated, were already powerful centres of the Kālāmukhas. These places are included in the Dharwar district, which to this day has the largest concentration of Vīraśaivas. The phenomenon may safely be attributed to the large-scale conversion of the Kālāmukhas into Vīraśaivas in the formative period of the Vīraśaiva movement.

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tried to reorganize the Śaivite priesthood of south India on the basis of medieval temple worship and *bhakti* propaganda, both of which were coincidental to the rise of the Śaivite sects. The reorganization was necessitated by the opposition of the orthodox Smārtas and the heterodox Jains. The success of the Kālāmukhas is evident from the increasing number of their temples and monasteries between 800-1200, as also from the delimitation of the Jain spheres of influence in south India.

The early Kālāmukhas (800-1000) were patronized by the kings for psychological satisfaction resulting from the so-called acquisition of religious merit. But the later Kālāmukhas (1000-1200) were patronized as a matter of political expediency. The epigraphic references to the concentration of executive and priestly power in the same hands illustrate the growth of a Śaivite priest-ruler combine which worked for the perpetual social subjugation and exploitation of the masses.

As part of a sectarian movement the Kālāmukhas were clearly related to the earlier Nāyanārs and later Vīraśaivas. While the Nāyanārs prepared the ground for the rise of the Śaivite sects, the Kālāmukhas spread it to Mysore and Andhra Pradesh and the Vīraśaivas lent it maturity. We also notice considerable social tension between the rival priesthoods of the Śaivites and the Jains, both trying for greater share of political patronage and social support. The ultimate success of the Śaivite sects in this struggle may be explained by reference to their numerous following, their violent attacks on the Jains as also by reason of their greater accumulation of wealth in the form of recurring revenues, bullion, cattle, orchards, flower-gardens and industrial workshops which included oil-mills and looms besides potters' houses.[41]

41. The greatest of Jain *basadis* offer no comparison even to the average wealthy Śaivite establishments of the early medieval period, let alone the great temples of the Pallavas, Coḷas, Cālukyas and Rāṣṭrakūṭas; for wealth of some Śaivite temples of the Deccan, see *EI*, xxiii, no. 25; *EI*, iii, no. 40; xvi, no. 1.

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Temples as Landed Magnates in Early Medieval South India (*c.* A.D. 700-1300)

D. N. JHA

The growth of massive Hindu temples and religious establishments in south India coincides with the increasing popularity of donating land and other objects without which their maintenance would have been impossible.[1] It appears from a preliminary survey of 117 Pallava documents that nearly 53 record donations made to temples. Out of these 53 a dozen or more inscriptions refer to gifts of plots of land and whole villages, and about 30 record donations of gold amounting to more than 2,000 *kaḷañju*. Livestock, paddy, etc., mentioned in some inscriptions

Abbreviations:

IESHR—The Indian Economic and Social History Review

JAS—Journal of Asian Studies

JESHO—Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient

Proceedings Tamil Studies—Proceedings of the Second International Conference Seminar of Tamil Studies, Madras—India, January 1968, ii (Madras, 1970)

SII—South Indian Inscriptions

1. It has been suggested that the first systematic attempt to spread the temple cult in south India was made in pre-Pallava times when the king Koccenkaṇāṉ is said to have built 78 temples (Dorai Rangaswamy, *The Religion and Philosophy of Tevāram*, pp. 9-10, cited in R. N. Nandi, "Social and Religious Developments in the Deccan" [*c.* A.D. 600-1000], Ph.D. thesis, Patna University, 1969, p. 239). It was, however, from the seventh century A.D. that the practice of temple construction tended to become widespread both in south and north India.

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as objects of gift, occupy a relatively minor place in the Pallava records.

More consolidated evidence of endowments to temples is available from the period of the Coḷas who succeeded the Pallavas in Tamil Nadu. From a comparison of the records of the two south Indian dynasties it appears that the Coḷas certainly donated more liberally to different temples than their predecessors. Thus at Tirupati only 11 donative records belong to the Pallava period whereas 31 are assignable to the time of the Coḷas. Similarly at Chidambaram of the 230 inscriptions deciphered so far not a single comes from the Pallava period, whereas no less than 75 may be assigned to the time of the Coḷas. Of these at least 41, which range in dates from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, record land endowments to the local temple. Increasing royal patronage to temples during Coḷa times is amply borne out by the Tanjore records which reveal that Rājarāja I (985-1016) alone presented to the Great Temple golden articles weighing 41,557 *kaḷañju* or nearly 484 lbs. and jewels worth 10,000 *poṉ*, equal to as many *kaḷañju* in gold. He is also said to have donated silver utensils weighing 50,650 *kaḷañju* in all. Several inscriptions record an order of Rājarāja directing specified villages to pay revenue in paddy and gold to the Tanjore temple treasury. Three such records, containing a single order, list 57 villages, located as far away as Ceylon.[2] Not surprisingly, land and village endowments to temples made by the Coḷas outnumber those by the Pallavas, though precise quantitative data on the point remain to be collected.[3] Apart from the imperial rulers, military chiefs and feudatories also made endowments to temples. Epigraphic sources indicate that the Bāṇas, the Muttaraiyars, the Coḷas of Renāṇḍu, Uṟaiyūr and Paḷaiyārai, the Koḍumbālūr chiefs and the Adigamāṇas, all feudatories of the Pallavas at one time or another, made gifts of land and other objects to temples. This

2. *SII*, ii, nos. 4, 5 and 92.

3. It has been postulated that "royal patronage to temples produced political returns and served as an important instrument by which existing institutions could be adapted... to serve royal purposes", G. W. Spencer, "Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India", *JESHO*, xii (1969), 51.

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practice was followed on a larger scale by the feudatories of the imperial Coḷas and the Cālukyas of Kalyāna. Local village and town assemblies, which became an important feature of administrative organization under the Coḷas, seem to have made various kinds of gifts to gods.[4] Endowments by private individuals and merchant guilds accounted for a small part of the wealth which accumulated in the early medieval south Indian temples. The present paper, based on an analysis of some Pallava and Coḷa inscriptions, seeks to suggest that the land grants to temples affected their internal organization and gave them feudal dimensions.

The growth in the economic resources of the temple led to a corresponding increase in the number of persons whose services were required by it. In the Pallava period when gifts in cash and kind were made to the temple on a limited scale it was not possible for it to engage many persons for its maintenance; nor was it necessary owing to the comparatively less complex routine and mode of worship of the deity. During the reign of the Pallava king Parameśvaravarman I (A.D. 670-80) the Śiva temple at Kūram was managed by only four persons who offered daily worship to the deity, watered the *maṇḍapam* everyday and recited passages from the *Mahābhārata*. The biggest temple staff (*koyil parivāram*) during the Pallava rule seems to have been that of the Mukteśvara shrine where it numbered 54.[5]

Religious establishments in Coḷa times, however, came to possess much more elaborate personnel for their management.[6]

4. *SII*, iii, nos. 1, 44, 489-93 of 1907; 52, 57, 508 of 1911; 165, 299 of 1917; 174, 176 of 1923. For a detailed discussion of temple grants during the Coḷa period see B. K. Pandeya, "Temple Economy under the Coḷas" (Ph. D. thesis, Patna University, 1969), chapters II and IV. A refreshing analysis of temple endowments in early medieval Karnataka is seen in Sister M. Liceria, A. C., "Social and Economic History of Karnataka [c. A.D. 1000-1300]" (Ph. D. thesis, Patna University, 1972), chapters I and II.

5. C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas* (Madras, 1934), p. 178.

6. This can be inferred from a preliminary survey of the records of the Koranganātha, Kīḷappaḷuvūr and Tanjore temples. K. K. Pillay (*The Suchindram Temple*, Madras, 1953) has also arrived at a similar conclusion on

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The Tanjore temple records reveal that more than 600 persons were employed in the Rājarājeśvara temple alone. Out of this nearly 400 were dancing girls and no less than 200 were men servants comprising dancing masters, musicians, drummers, tailors, goldsmiths, accountants and so on. Different categories of employees attached to the Tanjore temple seem to have been supervised by a number of superintendents whose existence is borne out by the records. We have definite reference to superintendents of temple women, female musicians, goldsmiths, accountants and so on at the Great Temple. Judging from the number of persons working here and at some other contemporary religious establishments, it may be reasonably suggested that the temple staff tended to expand during the time of the Coḷas. Thus the role of early medieval south Indian temple as a big employer has rightly been emphasized.[7] But in the absence of adequate statistical data relating to different Coḷa temples it is difficult to form a correct idea of the employment opportunities which they may have afforded.

A striking feature of the temple organization from the time of the imperial Pallavas appears to have been the practice of paying in kind to the temple servants for the services rendered to the deity. An inscription of the time of Nandivarman III (A.D.844-66) states than in the Śiva temple at Tiruvallam the Śiva Brāhmaṇas received 500 *kāḍi* of paddy for their services, the Śrībali Koṭṭuvār 500 *kāḍi* of paddy, and singers and those who picked flowers for temple garlands received 900 *kāḍi* of paddy. According to another record ascribed to his reign, the local assembly was to pay to the Bilvanātheśvara temple 2,000 *kāḍi* of paddy out of which 600 *kāḍi* were allotted for offerings, 500 for Śiva Brāhmaṇas, 500 for drummers and 400 for those who performed various other functions.[8]

the basis of inscriptions of the Sucindram temple. Cf. L. Nannithamby, "Village and Temple Administration in the Allur Inscriptions", *Proceedings Tamil Studies*, pp. 245-50.

7. *IESHR*, ii (1965), 367-72; Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (c. A.D. 1000-1500)*, i (Madras, 1936), 275-77; K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōḷas* (Madras, 1955), pp. 653-54.

8. *SII*, iii, no. 43.

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The Coḷa records, apart from referring more frequently than the earlier ones to payment in grain, furnish clear evidence of remunerating temple servants through assignments of land which does not seem to have been common in the preceding period. A deep inscribed in the fifth regnal year of Sundara-Coḷa (A.D.956-73) on the western wall of the Ādimūleśvara shrine records an endowment of land to the god Mahādeva to provide among other things, for the maintenance of some temple servants.[9] A Tanjore record states that 400 dancing girls were assigned each a *pangu* (share) comprising a house and one *vēli* of land yielding a net revenue of 100 *kalam* of paddy and that about 100 such shares were earmarked for the maintenance of 212 men servants working in the temple in various capacities. An inscription of the fourth year of the Coḷa viceroy Jaṭāvarman Sundara-Coḷa Pāṇḍya (eleventh century), son of Rājendra I, from Maṇṇārkoyil (Ambasamudram taluk, Tirunelveli district), records the decision of the local assembly regarding the lands and houses granted to the gardeners, drummers, potters, garland-makers, torch-bearers, etc., working at the temple.[10] According to another Coḷa epigraph one Veḷāṉ Vīranāraṇaṉ endowed a plot of land for the maintenance of four persons who used to sing the Tiruppadiyam hymns to the accompaniment of *uḍukkai* and *tāḷam* daily during the three services in the temple.[11] Numerous other inscriptions of the Coḷa period suggest that the assignment of land for the maintenance of the temple staff was very much in vogue.[12]

The practice of remunerating temple employees in kind or through assignments of land will have to be understood against the general background of the currency situation prevalent in the Coḷa period. In the context of north India a similar phenomenon has been partially linked up with the gradual fall in the volume of India's foreign trade and the consequent decline of money economy.[13] There seems to have been a comparative

9. Ibid. xiii, no. 106.
10. Ibid. xiv, nos. 132, 153.
11. Ibid. xiii, no. 51.
12. 393 of 1915; 729 of 1919, etc.
13. R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism* (Calcutta, 1965), pp. 66ff. Lallanji

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paucity of coins in most parts of India in the pre-Coḷa period owing to languishing foreign trade. How far this is true of south India during Coḷa times is difficult to ascertain in the absence of any quantitative study of the available contemporary numismatic material. But the growth of south Indian trade with foreign countries from the tenth century onwards and the emergence of a large number of merchant guilds which participated in it may have provided a congenial atmosphere for the development of a stable monetary system. Besides, our sources also unmistakably indicate that more cash donations were made to religious institutions after the Pallavas than during their rule. But two factors seem to have discouraged the use of coins for paying the temple personnel for various services to the deity. In the first place, the Coḷas and other ruling dynasties in south India mostly issued high denomination coins of such metals as gold and silver which could not have been used for ordinary economic transactions. Secondly, the cash donations received by temples from different sources gradually came to be converted into unproductive deposits.[14] Also, it is extremely doubtful whether the little proportion of their money that may have remained in circulation could effectively flow into private economic relations.[15] Thus the practice of paying temple staff through allotments of land may be symptomatic of the growth of feudalism whose essence lay in the organization of the entire social structure on the basis of land.

The feudal trait of the early medieval south Indian temples owes a great deal to *devadāna* gifts of land which they received from the Pallava period onwards. That these endowments were made in perpetuity may be inferred from the Valurpalaiyam plates of Nandivarman III (A.D.844-66) which end with an appeal to future rulers to protect the grants of the village

Gopal (*The Economic Life of Northern India*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1965, pp. 215-21) also suggests a growing paucity and debasement of coins in north India during the early medieval period.

14. D. D. Kosambi, *Myth and Reality* (Bombay, 1962), p. 40, fn. 25.

15. B. D. Chattopadhyaya, "Coins and Currency Systems in Early South India" [c. A.D. 225-1300] (D. Phil thesis, University of Cambridge, 1969), pp. 303-4.

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Tirukkāṭṭupaḷḷi to the Śiva temple.[16] The perpetual nature of temple grants came to be further emphasized in Coḷa times, as is indicated by the frequent occurrence of imprecatory verses at the end of the charters. But whether a grant of *devadāna* land necessarily meant the transfer of rights of ownership to the grantee is controversial. Minakshi[17] points out that the Pallava charters do not seem to confer on the temples the right to sell, mortgage or alienate the landed property bestowed upon them; nor do the Coḷa inscriptions state that the rights of sale, mortgage and bequest were granted to the temple authorities, though some of them refer to the transfer of *devadāna* land by one temple to another in lieu of a specified payment. Thus an inscription of an unidentified Coḷa king found in the Koraṅganātha temple at Srīnivāsanallūr of the Musiri taluk (Trichinopoly district) registers a sale of land as a tax-free *devadāna* by the members of the *mūlapariṣad* of Mahendramaṅgalam to the temple of Tirukkurakkuṭṭurai-Parumānaḍigaḷ.[18] A deed inscribed in the third year of Gaṇḍarāditya (A.D.950-57) on the southern wall of the central shrine of the Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple at Kumbhakonam records a sale of five *vēlis* of land at Ariśalūr by the assembly of Tirukkuḍamūkkil to the temple for 500 *kaḻañju* of gold and of another five *vēḷis* for 1,000 *kaḻañju*.[19] An epigraph from the same temple issued in the third year of Rājakeśarīvarman states that a quarter portion of a *vēḷi* of land (*kāṛchey*) was sold by the *mūlapariṣad* of Tirukkuḍamūkkil to one Aravaṇ Kalaṅgāmalai, a *veḷḷāḷa* resident of Tanjore, who endowed it to another temple for the daily feeding of a *śivayogī*.[20] In the first two cases the land in question was

16. *SII*, ii, no. 98.
17. Op. cit., p. 142.
18. *SII*, xiii, no. 26.
19. Ibid. no. 46.
20. Ibid. no. 44. An inscription of the time of Rājendra Cōḷa III dated A.D. 1255 also records a gift of land to a temple by a private individual after purchasing it from another person (418 to 1904). Sometimes the *devadāna* land could be sold also to private individuals, as can be gathered from a record of the time of Rājarāja I dated A.D. 1000 which records the sale of land by a temple to one Kamban Manivan, the price being deposited in its treasury to be utilized for feeding brāhmaṇas and *śivayogīs* on all nine days of the Chittrai festival.

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directly sold to the temple, but in the last instance it was sold to a private individual who endowed it to a temple. All the three records indicate that temple land could be disposed of, though only for religious purposes.[21] The almost total absence of secular land-sale deeds in the Coḷa period, however, should not necessarily mean that the right of the temple to the *devadāna* land was extremely limited in nature. Contrary to this, Karashima, on the basis of a comparative study of the records relating to a *brahmadeya* and a non-*brahmadeya* village of Coḷa times, finds a strong connection between the individual and the land in the former as opposed to a weak one in the latter.[22] This is also corroborated by our analysis of the 40 donative inscriptions ranging throughout the Coḷa period and inscribed on the walls of the Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple of the *brahmadeya* village of Tirukkuḍamūkkil (modern Kumbhakonam). It appears from these records that out of the 18 gifts of land 13 were made by private individuals.[23] Although a detailed study of the epigraphic material relating to different Coḷa *brahmadeya* villages in and around which many temples were situated has yet to be made,[24] the limited available data may imply that the temples which received grants of land practically enjoyed it at will.

It was in keeping with their control over the endowed land that the temples discharged their vital responsibilities towards it. During the Coḷa period, for instance, a series of Śrīraṅgam temple inscriptions from the reign of Kulottuṅga I (A.D. 1070-

21. Numerous examples of land transfer in which the temple was involved are available from the Coḷa period.

22. N. Karashima, "Allūr and Īśānamangalam", *IESHR*, ii (1965), 150-51. Elsewhere Karashima has tried to prove that the *brahmadeya* villages were the local nuclei of the Cōḷa power structure, their function being to integrate and control the surrounding non-*brahmadeya* villages (*Proceedings Tamil Studies*, pp. 233-50). Cf. T. V. Mahalingam, "Village Communities in South India", *Transactions of the Archaeological Society of South India*, i (1955), 33-46.

23. There are in the temple 42 records out of which 40 are assignable to the Cōḷa period. See T. V. Mahalingam, "The Nāgeśvarasvāmī Temple", *Journal of Indian History*, xiv, 83-99.

24. A close examination of Cōḷa inscriptions shows that in Colamaṇḍalam there may have existed nearly 240 *brahmadeyas* during the reign of Rājarāja I alone (N. Karashima, *Proceedings Tamil Studies*, pp. 237-38).

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1118) "describe a gigantic process of redevelopment of a large portion of temple lands buried under sand by floods of the Kaveri river".[25] It may, however, be argued that since endowments were made in order to meet the specific requirements stipulated in the gift deeds (e.g., the temple maintenace, festivals honouring the deities, food offering to the deities, feeding of the brāhmaṇas, etc.), the early medieval south Indian temple could not have enjoyed unlimited right over the endowed land or village. This hypothesis may be supported by several records which refer to royal inquiries into temple accounts. From a thematic and chronological arrangement of relevant inscriptions Spencer has inferred that the investigation of temple accounts was far more common under the Coḷas than under other dynasties. He adds that a third of these Coḷa records belong to the reign of Rājarāja I alone.[26] Evidently royal intervention in the financial affairs of the temple could not have been a standard royal instrument to restrict the rights of the temple over the endowed land.

Temples which became rich landowning institutions in course of time could not have cultivated all their lands directly which perhaps led to the practice of leasing them to tenants. Extant land grants do not clearly indicate that early medieval south Indian temples, like the north Indian donees,[27] had the right to enjoy the land and get it enjoyed, to cultivate it and get it cultivated. But several inscriptions from the Pallava period onwards testify to the fact that they leased out their land to tenants. Thus a Pallava record from Tirupati states that the temple land was leased out to the husbandmen of the *nāḍu*, presumably to facilitate its proper cultivation and the collection of the lease-produce. But more frequent reference to temple tenants is found in the Coḷa inscriptions which often specify the share which the temple

25. Burton Stein, "The State, the Temple and Agricultural Development: A Study in Medieval South India", *Economic Weekly*, Annual Number, 1961, 179. Also see his "The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple", *JAS*, xix (1960), 163-76.

26. G. W. Spencer, "Royal Initiative under Rājarāja I: Auditing of Temple Accounts", *IESHR*, vii (1970), 437.

27. R. S. Sharma, op. cit., pp. 6, 92, 266.

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was to receive out of the total produce of the tenanted land. An inscription issued in the 13th year of Sundara-Coḷa (A.D. 957-73) from the Agastyeśvara temple (Trichinopoly district) informs us that the temple authorities assigned 124 *vēli* of *devadāna* land to an individual on the condition that he would measure out 2,880 *kalam* of paddy every year to the temple at the rate of 120 *kalam* per *vēli*.[28] Another charter of the 17th year of the same ruler from the Cintāmaṇīśvara temple (Ponneri taluk, Chingleput district) lays down that the tenants were to supply annually a certain amount of oil.[29] Similar evidence is also available from the reign of Rājarāja I (A.D. 965-1016). Thus one Perumbaḷḷi-koṇḍān Sundaram, who is mentioned as a tenant of the Subramanya temple at Tiruviḍaikkoli in an inscription of the ninth year of Rājarāja I, is stated to have given 250 *kalam* out of the yield of five *vēli* of its land which he cultivated. An epigraph from the Somanātheśvara temple at Āttūr in Tinnevelly district, dated in the 22nd year of the same ruler, registers an endowment of land to the deity by a certain Bhāradvajaṇ Māthava Uḍaiyadivākaraṇ with himself as the tenant, though the condition on which he held it is not known.[30] Still another inscription from Trichinopoly district, issued in the 28th year of Rājarāja I, seems to record an undertaking given by a tenant to pay a specified quantity of paddy from the temple lands cultivated by him.[31] A clear example of the leasing out of temple land is furnished by a stone inscription from Nagapattinam taluk (Tanjore district) dated A.D. 1117 which details an allotment of fallow temple land to several persons who were required to bring it under the plough and contribute paddy out of its produce for *śrībali* and other offerings.[32] Similarly, a record of A.D. 1243 from the Vedaraṇyeśvara temple in the Tanjore district states that one Uyyavandān donated two plots of land for burning a perpetual lamp to the deity and that it was made over to Śrīkṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭa and others of Anapāyacaturvedimaṅgalam

28. 370 of 1924.
29. *SII*, xiii, no. 281A.
30. 409 of 1929-30.
31. 388 of 1924.
32. *SII*, xvii, no. 624 (578 of 1904).

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who undertook to maintain the lamp out of the balance left after paying the *kaḍamai* dues.[33] These instances refer to tenants working on plots of land. But obviously the temples must have needed a large number of people to work their land in cases where whole villages were granted to them. Thus it would not be unreasonable to hold that land and village endowments to religious institutions gave rise to feudal agrarian relations leading in turn, as will be shown presently, to the depression of the peasantry.

The decline of the peasantry in early medieval south India may have been caused to a certain extent by the fiscal concessions which accompanied the gifts of land and villages to temples. A comparative study of the available epigraphic material relating to the Pallava and Coḷa periods reveals that the number of such concessions (*parihāras*) increased in course of time. Whereas the number of *parihāras* in the early Pallava records is stated to be 18, the Vēḷūrpāḷaiyam plates of the time of Nandivarman III mention as many as 22 fiscal rights that were granted to the god Mahādeva.[34] One of the longest, if not the exhaustive, lists of *parihāras* attached to a piece of *devadāna* land, however, is found in an inscription issued in the sixth year of Rājendra I (A.D.1012-44) where no less than 50 of them are enumerated.[35] Since the *parihāras* indicate exemption from the payment of taxes originally payable to the state and the transfer of various land rights of the king to donees, an increase in their number suggests a correspondingly heavier burden of taxes which the people may have found difficult to pay. An inscription from Tirumāḷam (Tanjore district) dated A.D. 1112 speaks of the eviction of some tenants from a piece of *devadāna* land on account of the accumulation of arrear of *melvāram* due from them.[36] According to another record of A.D. 1222 a tenant in occupa ion of some temple land had to part with it even after the payment of the arrear of taxes due from him.[37] These illustra-

33. 429 of 1909.
34. *SII*, ii, no. 98.
35. Ibid. iii, no. 205.
36. 93 of 1910.
37. 209 of 1925.

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tions leave no doubt that the grant of fiscal privileges with land or village to the temples caused greater economic subjection of the peasants.[38]

The practice of levying fresh imposts from the local inhabitants for the maintenance of temple in Coḷa times may have further contributed to the unhappy lot of peasants. It is stated in a record of A.D. 922 from Erode that such new cesses as half *paṇam* on each household (*kuḍi*), an eighth of a *paṇam* each from either party to a marriage and one *mañjāḍi* and one *kāśu* of gold from each crematorium were levied from the people of a whole *nāḍu* for providing for the worship of Viṣṇu in a local temple.[39] It is gathered from a Tanjore inscription of the time of Rājarāja that 100 *kāśu* was raised from the local professional and religious groups for making certain necessary endowments to a temple of the place.[40] Still another epigraph of A.D. 1170 from South Arcot district tells us that the local assemblies decided to raise certain contributions for meeting the cost of services and offerings to the new deity.[41] All this proves that new levies were often collected from the people on the pretext of meeting the requirements of temples. The above dues may have increased the total weight of taxation, though their occasional collection in limited areas distinguishes them from medieval European monastic tithes which were much more widespread in character.

Although a detailed discussion of the various fiscal terms mentioned in inscriptions is not possible here, an analysis of

38. It has been postulated on the basis of a solitary Hoysala charter of A.D. 1272 (*EC*, iv, Hg., no. 39) that the conditions governing the lease of temple lands were more favourable and helpful to tenants than those relating to the tenants of brāhamaṇa landholders (Sister M. Liceria, op. cit., pp. 70-71). But this view is not supported by the Coḷa records which prove that the peasants and temple employees, who were assigned land for their maintenance (*jīvitam*), often protested, even violently, against the unjust measures adopted by the authorities of religious establishments (N. Vanamamalai, "Consolidation of Feudalism and Antifeudal Struggles During Chola Imperialist Rule", *Proceedings Tamil Studies*, pp. 237-38).

39. 167 of 1910.

40. 198 of 1925.

41. 21 of 1903.

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some of them would suggest that from the Pallava period onwards temples tended to become centres of political power, leading to the decentralization of central authority. According to the Vēḷūrpāḷaiyam plates of the Pallava Nandivarman III such taxes as *nāḍāṭci, ūrāṭci* and *nāḍu-kāval* were transferred to a temple. The terms *nāḍāṭci* and *ūrāṭci* have been interpreted respectively as a fee for the administration of a district and a cess for that of a village. The word *nāḍu-kāval* perhaps denotes some kind of fee for keeping watch in the district. Whereas the first two taxes are also stated in the Coḷa records to have been collected by temples from the inhabitants of *devadāna* villages, the last is often indicated by a due called *pāḍi-kāval*. A lithic record from the central shrine of Umā-maheśvara temple at Kōnērirājapuram, assignable to the reign of Uttama-Coḷa (A.D. 970-85), grants, among other privileges, the right to collect the above-mentioned dues from villagers.[42] An inscription issued in the sixth year of Rājendra I (A.D. 1012-44) makes similar concessions.[43] Several other Coḷa epigraphs indicate that often the temples received from the king not only tax-free (*iṟaiyili*) grants of land and villages but also the privilege of demanding from the inhabitants fees for running the local administration including district patrol. All this proves that temples came to be increasingly associated with administration, though our sources do not indicate the manner in which they may have exercised actual administrative control over the inhabitants of gift villages or of larger territorial units.

The weakening of the central authority may also have occurred from the grant to temples of the privilege of realizing judicial fines from the people. It is known from a Pallava record referred to above that already in the time of Nandivarman III a temple was allowed to collect *maṉṟupāḍu* from the local inhabitants. The term *maṉṟupāḍu* has been generally understood in the sense of fines imposed by a court of law and it occurs in a number of Coḷa epigraphs; they also mention two other fines as being enjoyed by the deity to whom land or

42. *SII*, iii, no. 151.
43. *Ibid.* no. 205.

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village was granted. An inscription of the time of Vīrarājendra records that the king granted to the Paśupatīśvara temple the village of Pākkūr with, *inter alia*, the right to collect the three fines called *maṇṛupāḍu, daṇḍa and kuṛṛam*.[44] A record of Kulottuṅga III states that he donated to the Karuvūr temple the village of Maṇṇaṛai together with the right to receive *maṇṛupāḍu, daṇḍa* and *kuṛṛam* from the inhabitants.[45] That the judicial fines may have been collected by temples is further corroborated by several Cola charters which confer upon them the right to punish criminals. An inscription of the 57th year of Parāntaka I states that if a crime or sin becomes public the god alone (i.e., temple authorities) shall punish the inhabitants of the village granted to the local temple.[46] Although our sources do not indicate that the temple actually functioned as a judicial court and sentenced criminals in *devadāna* villages, they refer to individuals who made gifts to the religious establishments for the atonement of their crimes. An epigraph from Tanjore speaks of nobles who donated livestock to the local temple for fulfilling a penance, apparently as a result of having been involved in a military disaster or possibly an abortive rebellion against the king.[47] A more clear example of some kind of payment to the temple as a penance for the commission of crimes is provided by an inscription from the Agastyeśvara temple at Mēlappaḷuvūr in Uḍaiyārpāḷayam taluk (Trichinopoly district) belonging to the 15th year of the reign of perhaps Rājendra I. This record refers to an undertaking by the temple managers to burn two perpetual lamps before the images in return for land and money given to them by two individuals as an atonement for a homicide committed by them.[48] According to a lithic record from the Raṅganātha temple at Singavaram in the Gingee taluk (South Arcot district) dated

44. *SII*. iii. pt. I, no. 21.
45. Ibid. no. 23. The above-mentioned fines seem to resemble the expression *daśāparādha* (fines from ten offences) mentioned in north Indian inscriptions from the Gupta period onwards (D. N. Jha, *Revenue System in Post-Maurya and Gupta Times*, Calcutta, 1967, pp. 89-91).
46. *SII*. iii, no. 12.
47. *IESIIR*, iii (1966), 285, 17.
48. 372 of 1924.

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A.D. 1058, a certain Kāri Murugan gave 96 sheep for a perpetual lamp in expiation of the sin of having killed Kōdaṇḍan Davan, the commander of Tāṇamaḍai Jaṇanātha-t-terindavilligaḷ.[49] It also refers to one Vaikundaṇ Piccan who made a gift of sheep for two perpetual lamps for absolving himself from the sin of having killed two persons whose names it mentions.[50] These instances do not imply the actual collection of fines occurring in the land grants cited above. But they certainly indicate that the ends of justice could be met if one paid to the gods for the offence committed by him.

It is clear from our analysis that grants of land and village to temples during the Pallava and Coḷa periods gave rise to several important developments. In the first place, they increasingly led to an expansion of temple personnel who were paid in kind or through allotments of land. Secondly, they resulted in the growth of what may be called feudal land tenure as is evident from numerous epigraphic references to tenants on *devadāna* lands. Thirdly, fiscal concessions and immunities, which accompanied many grants, perhaps caused greater economic bondage of the peasantry. And finally, the endowments of land and village to temples weakened the central authority. All this tended to give a feudal character to south Indian temples. But this hypothesis calls for a detailed study of the tenurial relations arising out of land grants and the contemporary revenue system so that their feudal nature could be precisely determined.

49. *SII*, xvii, no. 249.
50. *Ibid.*

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Social Structure in Medieval Mithila
(*c.* A.D. 1200-1600)

RADHAKRISHNA CHOUDHARY

The social structure of Mithila in the middle ages was based on a feudal pattern, which provided for a landowning aristocracy on the one hand and a vast mass of dependent peasant producers on the other. The landowners constituted an extremely powerful class, of which the king was the most important. As a non-producing class they lived on the rental, mainly in kind, collected from the peasants and on the services rendered by the rural folk. Feudal corvee (forced labour or *begāra*) was a common feature, and the ordinary villagers were harassed and exploited. The feudal barons not only controlled the political system but also the social and economic life.

Caṇḍeśvara, a lawgiver and commentator of the fourteenth century, held that ministers were to be appointed on a hereditary basis, which naturally strengthened the bonds of the feudal order. The whole social and political system was organized on a feudal basis. Various feudal titles such as *mahāsāmantādhipati, mahāsāmanta, mahārāja, mahāmāṇḍalika, mahāmaṇḍaleśvara, sāmanta, rāṇaka, rauta, ṭhakkura,* etc. are known to us from contemporary inscriptions and literature. Caṇḍeśvara discusses the legal status of the feudatories and the barons. According to him the *sāmantas* were appointed for the administration of a group of villages. We learn that a noble called Gaṇeśvara presided over the council of the feudatory

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chiefs of Mithila in the fourteenth century A.D. and held their chiefship. The feudal barons donated land, tanks, temples and performed the *tulāpuruṣadāna* or expensive *yajña*.

A few brāhmaṇas such as Bhavanāth Miśra Ayācī took pride in poverty; the brāhmaṇas of Mithila as a class enjoyed immense power and pelf and controlled the destiny of the kingdom. Rudradhara takes note of blackmarketeers and profiteers, rebels and vicious persons among them. The luxury of a small group went hand in hand with the appalling poverty of the people. Both Jyotirīśvara and Vidyāpati bewail the growing social inequality. An ordinary person is described as nothing more than a fallen creature. Vardhamāna cautions against *prakāśataskaras* such as traders, manufacturers, physicians, druggists, false arbitrators and witnesses, *mantrikas* and *tāntrikas*, who move freely in society in the guise of honest citizens.

II

During the period under review social immobility, fragmentation and self-sufficiency characterized the caste villages, and dynastic changes hardly produced any impression upon the system. Stability synchronized with an increasing petrifaction of the social structure. *Kulīnism* emerged as a powerful force. By its insistence on the purity of lineage, it gave prominence to birth, accomplishments and character. The earliest reference to the system can be traced to the Bangaon copperplate inscription of Vigrahpāla III. The brāhmaṇas of north Bihar attached great importance to the brāhmaṇas of Kolāñca, which is supported by the Pancobha copperplate inscription of Saṃgrāmagupta in the fifteenth century. Ādisūra is credited with having invited five Kolāñca brāhmaṇas to make a clean sweep of the impure practices that might have come from Buddhist Magadha. Since the Mithila scholar Vācaspati Miśra in his *Nyāyakaṇikā* mentions Ādisūra as his patron, it is believed that the king ruled somewhere in north Bihar or on the border of north Bihar and north Bengal (where he is credited with having invited five kāyasthas also). Vācaspati also mentions one Nṛga, who may have been either Ādisūra or an independent small prince somewhere in

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Mithila. Vācaspati had saved Mithila from the onslaughts of the Buddhists, and Ādisūra had requested the Kolāñca brāhmaṇas to make rules for the protection of brāhmaṇism.

In medieval times the brāhmaṇas came to be classified on the basis of territorial divisions as Sārasvatas, Gauḍas, Kānyakubjas, Maithilas and Autkalas. The system of limiting marriage to one's own section found favour with them. In Mithila the system of organizing the brāhmaṇas on sound lines according to *gotra, pravara* and *śākhā* is attributed to Ādisūra, and it is thought that from his time a skeleton genealogy came to be maintained and preserved. Marriage relations could be established only within the territorial caste, but certain generations on the side of the father and mother had to be avoided. This naturally created the need for a genealogical chart of every family, known as the *pañjī* system. But even before the introduction of this system in Mithila every brāhmaṇa family is believed to have kept the genealogical record of his family, a fact that finds support from Kumārila. The system was further organized under the Karṇāṭas, and the credit for placing it on more methodical lines goes to Harisiṃhadeva. It may be noted that Grierson highly praised the system of keeping and maintaining the genealogical records among the brāhmaṇas and the kāyasthas of Mithila.

The *pañjīs* were created to guard against the possibility of marrying a girl who might not be marriageable according to the *śāstra*. Excessive regard for the supposed purity of blood gave rise to the systematic practice of keeping genealogies and family records. In course of time the *pañjī* records, though one of the most extraordinary series in existence, led to many social complications. It was Harisiṃhadeva who finally settled the respective ranks of the different brāhmaṇa and karaṇa kāyastha families and laid down rules to govern marriages. His objective was to avoid the forbidden degrees of relationship and marriages. Certain approved professions, birth, accomplishment and character decided the issue of social status. In the beginning birth was not the sole consideration; learning and conduct were given the same importance as birth. Respectability in the beginning

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was personal, but it tended to become hereditary. Territorial names for exogamous sections were curiously mixed with names preserving the memory of a chief who founded the section in historic times. *Kula* and *mūla* express a circle of agnatic descent. Harimiśra and Vācaspati Miśra emphasized the importance of *kuladharma* and *mūla*. Like the brāhmaṇas, the karaṇa kāyasthas also came to have their own *pañjīs*.

The social hierarchy with all its carefully regulated marks of honour apportioned to each family prevails even today, both among the brāhmaṇas and the kāyasthas, and is strictly followed by the conservative sections. Since the brāhmaṇas and karaṇa kāyasthas of Mithila follow the *pañjīs* strictly they are regarded as Maithilas in spite of the fact that the structure of Maithila society has undergone great changes in recent years. Though it is not possible to fit in exactly the karaṇa kāyasthas (or kāyasthas in general) in the traditional four-varṇa system, they occupied important positions in the affairs of the state both under the Karṇāṭas and the Oinwāras, and they ranked fairly high, second only to the brāhmaṇas, in social hierarchy. The term karaṇa kāyastha implied both caste and profession. Though traditional, hereditary professions held the field, sometimes changes had to be allowed; for example, brāhmaṇas took to agriculture, and the śūdras were authorized to make grants to the brāhmaṇas.

Although Harisiṃhadeva determined the relative status of the brāhmaṇas and karaṇa kāyasthas, they proliferated into numerous sub-castes. Originally they were divided into about 180 and 200 *mūlas* respectively, but later these shot up to a little above one thousand *mūlas*. The stock *mūlas* were subdivided into various *mūlagrāmas* and *ḍerās*. Sometimes the *mūlas* are mentioned after the name of the village or of the *ḍerā*. The *mūlas* indicate either the original homeland or the territorial unit of the *bījipuruṣa* (founder of the line). While preparing these records attempts were made to collect *gotra, śākhā, pravara*, the earliest habitat, change, if any, thereafter, names of villages, whether the family had migrated along with the name of person who had migrated, etc. The name of the earliest known habitation came

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to be known as *mūla*. Some of the *mūlas* are common to both the brāhmaṇas and karaṇa kāyasthas.

In Mithila a person could improve his social status by establishing marital relationships with members of the higher *mūlas*. Those who failed to contract marriages with the *mūlas* of eqaul status for three generations came to be downgraded and reckoned as *gṛhasthas*. If a man of a lower *mūla* maintained marital relationship with the higher *mūlas* (that is, by obtaining grooms by paying a heavy amount as *vyavasthā*) his social status came to be upgraded. Generally poor brāhmaṇas of high *mūlas* were "purchased" as bridegrooms, and they were known as *bikauās*. In a period when birth was the decisive factor in status evaluation, the richer sections of the lower *mūlas* wanted to go up by establishing marriage connections with the poor *bikauās* of the higher *mūlas*. It resulted in polygamy, and sometimes a so-called *bhalamānuṣa* (gentleman) among the brāhmaṇas came to have as many as 50 wives. The death of such a husband meant widowhood for a good number of women. The conservative Maithilas even today insist on the high *mūlas*, and the śrotriyas among the brāhmaṇas and the *bhalamānuṣa* among the *kāyasthas* do not like to go out of their limited circle. The price was paid both for going up and coming down. Risley describes the *bikauās* as a class of vendors who emerged in Mithila as a result of this system.

The introduction of the *pañjī* system led to the development of two functional classes, the *pañjīkāras* and the *ghaṭakas*. The work of the compilation of the family trees was entrusted to a class of scholarly *pañjīkāras*. The *pañjīkāras* preserved them and went on making them up-to-date. Raghudeva Jhā and Sūryakara Ṭhākura are credited with having compiled the geneologies of the brāhmaṇas and kāyasthas respectively during the time of Harisiṁhadeva. The system was followed with strict accuracy, and *samūla* marriage was strictly prohibited. The main duty of the *pañjīkāras* was to issue the *asvajanapatra* (certificate of non-relationship) to the parties contracting marriage at the time of *siddhānta* or the finalization of negotiations. The system of *siddhānta* is still in vogue in Mithila among the brāhmaṇas and kāyasthas. So strong is the old tradition that the social

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hierarchy with its carefully regulated marks of honour prevails even today among these two communities. The *pañjī* prohibits marriage with the girls of the following kinds :

i) *sagotra*—the girl of the same *gotra* ;

ii) *sapiṇḍa*—within the seventh direct descent either from the paternal or maternal side ;

iii) in any case the bride should not be related up to the seventh generation in descent from the father's side and up to the fifth from the mother's side ;

iv) issue of grandfather—both maternal and paternal; and

v) daughter of the brother of the stepmother.

Since all the karaṇa kāyasthas belong to only one *gotra, Kāśyapa,* they are allowed to have *sagotra* marriage but not *samūla* marriage. It appears that the *Kāśyapa gotra* was thrust upon them later.

The system of *kulīnism* strongly affected the Maithila society. It encouraged excessive orthodoxy and empty formalism. Invidious social distinctions were perpetuated. Taking of cooked food outside the caste was interdicted, and the pursuit of hereditary profession was made mandatory. *Kulīnism* killed the initiative of a large mass of people, whose interest now lay not in society as a whole but in their own particular segment. The newly created *kulīnas* among the two communities prided themselves on their purity of blood and derided all those who ranked below them in social hierarchy. It helped the growth of a false sense of vanity. Like all traditional thinkers, Vidyāpati believed in the maintenance of the social *status quo,* and he advised persons to stick to their own vocations. Purely scriptural arguments were put forward in support of social inequality. The *brāhmaṇas* ramified into numerous categories on the basis of *gotra, śākhā* and *pravara.* Caṇḍeśvara quoted a passage from Devala regarding the eight grades of brāhmaṇas, indicating thereby eight subcastes. People of different *gotras* and *pravaras* claiming descent from some distant *ṛṣi* or sage ancestors became endogamous castes. In Mithila the brāhmaṇas were divided into śrotriyas, yogyas, pañjīprabandhas and jaibāras. Ranks were settled for each one of them, and marriage rules were accordingly fixed. Whatever flexibility early *kulīnism* had disappeared gradually.

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Kulinism held a wider appeal for the upper caste people in the beginning and also left some scope for the improvisation of the status of the lower caste people. It seems that from Mithila it spread to Bengal and Assam. The Bengali *kulapañjikā* texts are indebted to the rules prescribed by Harimiśra and Vācaspatimiśra, and the kāyasthas of Assam borrowed the institution of *kulinism* from Mithila.

III

A distinctive feature of the social structure of medieval Mithila was the existence of numerous castes and sub-castes. The medieval Maithila *nibandhakāras* (law commentators) emphasized the necessity of maintaining the old social order based on the *varṇāśrama* system, which, according to Vidyāpati, meant the observance of the respective duties of various castes. The inevitability of the caste was the common bond that helped the formation of a coherent society, and the class structure was maintained by the association of the nobles with the armed retainers. It was ordained that everybody should earn his livelihood according to his caste. The violation of caste rules involved social ostracism. An indefinite number of despised castes were brought under the traditional framework of the four varṇas. The *nibandhakāras* believed that the traditional social system guaranteed social stability. A country where caste rules are not observed is described as a *mlechha* country in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, and Vidyāpati repeats it in one of his writings.

On the ideological plane the brāhmaṇas kept alive the orthodox tradition of caste. They compiled the *smṛtis* containing rules regarding the social practices of the varṇas, their food, dress, marriage, inheritance, purificatory rites and ceremonies from birth to death. The officers of the state tried to enforce caste rules and religious taboos in strict conformity with the holy scriptures. In the thirteenth century Rāmasimhadeva of the Karṇāṭa dynasty appointed an officer in each village to adjudicate upon all questions arising from the working of the canons of conduct. Though orthodox and conservative in socio-religious matters, Rāmasiṃhadeva possessed a liberal outlook, as can be inferred from his offer of the office of the chief priest to a visiting Tibetan

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Buddhist traveller, Dharamasvāmī. However, the latter thankfully declined the honour, for he had to return to Tibet. In Mithila all traces of Buddhism were destroyed by the brāhmaṇas in collusion with the rulers and all kinds of rigid practices were encouraged. Even journey outside the territorial limits of Mithila was forbidden except in the case of those who went on pilgrimage to Gaya. Going southwards across the Ganga needed fresh initiation. Any violation of the traditional social order and rules was a source of anxiety to the orthodox thinkers, and Vidyāpati bewails the declining moral standard of the people.

In Mithila the brāhmaṇas were the most powerful feudal barons enjoying special prerogatives. They were powerful members of the government, and as landowning aristocracy they wielded substantial political and economic power from the highest to the lowest level. They received as well as made land grants. The game of war and politics was a preserve of the well-born aristocrats. By the time of Caṇḍeśvara the brāhmaṇas had come to act as rulers, ministers, commanders, officers of state, and had even taken to trade and agriculture. They enjoyed immunity from murder and mutilation, and were given the option to pay their fines in instalments. For about two hundred years they had usurped all power and become extremely powerful. Caṇḍeśvara prescribed royal consultations with the brāhmaṇas before taking any decision. In conformity with the views of Laksmīdhara, he conceded that no sin was incurred by tilling the land if the brāhmaṇa agriculturists paid one-sixth of the produce as tax to the king, one-twentieth to the gods and one-thirtieth to the brāhmaṇas. The emergence of the brāhmaṇas as cultivating classes implied the introduction of an important social and economic element in the countryside. From the mode of payment to the various categories of village officers, prescribed by Caṇḍeśvara, it appears that there was much of feudal element in medieval Mithila. We learn from the *Prākṛtapaiṅgalam* that Haribrahma was a protégé of of Caṇḍeśvara. The colophons of numerous unpublished manuscripts in Mithila preserve many names of such persons. Even an ordinary brāhmaṇa minister used high-sounding titles, which was the case with almost all the feudal nobles.

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IV

The kṣatriyas had lost in prominence, as the political power had been usurped by the brāhmaṇas. The Rajputs designated themselves as kṣatriyas. Jyotirīśvara gives a long list of 72 kṣatriya-Rajput clans, and Vidyāpati mentions the Candellas and Cauhānas. Generally speaking, all rulers in the past were treated as kṣatriyas and classed as such, but the situation changed considerably when the brāhmaṇas themselves became rulers. It is held by some that the kṣatriyas also had their *pañjīs*, but we have not come across any one so far. Risley noticed the *pañjīs* of the vaiśyas in the nineteenth century but could not trace any family tree of the kṣatriyas. One wonders whether Harisiṃhadeva, described as *pamārakṣatriya* by the Rajputs of Mithila, who came to be noted for their bravery, did make provision for the maintenance of the *pañjī* among his own kinsmen. Even those who claim descent from Harisimhadeva do not have any such *pañjī* today, and there is a lot of confusion in the genealogical table of Gandhwariya Rajputs of Mithila. It appears that other castes did not take as much interest in the *pañjīs* as did the brāhmaṇas and the kāyasthas.

With the passage of time and change in the political set-up we notice some modification in the respective duties of the castes. The traditional theory relating to the professions was not strictly adhered to. Different castes had by then adopted different professions; for example, the brāhmaṇas had, besides practising agriculture and trade, also taken to cooking, and the status of the śūdras had also changed. According to Caṇḍeśvara, a brāhmaṇa could eat the food of a good śūdra for gaining cows, land, etc. Both Lakṣmīdhara and Caṇḍeśvara advise that the śūdras commit no sin if they give rice to a brāhmaṇa for getting it cooked at the latter's house.

As a secular caste, the karaṇa kāyasthas in general had to put up with the rulers. The mention of *karaṇādhyakṣa* by Jyotirīśvara suggests that there was an organization of the karaṇas in medieval Mithila presided over by an officer of the above designation. The karaṇas played a prominent part in the social polity. They combined administrative duties with those of a scribe. They

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were important men of letters, and according to Vidyāpati they also took to teaching. The karaṇas and the kāyasthas in Mithila were synonymous, and they came to be known as karaṇa kāyasthas. In Assam, Bengal and Orissa they are still known as karaṇas. A *śāsanika* karaṇa kāyastha of Ara (fifteenth century A.D.) named Jayarāmadatta wrote the *Kālacakratantra,* the manuscript of which is preserved in the Cambridge University Library. The term *śāsanika* applied to the karaṇa kāyastha indicates that he used to draft royal charters. Those who acted as scribes used to charge their usual fees from the parties concerned, as is evident from the *Likhanāvalī*. Various contemporary sources mention the names of some of the distinguished karaṇa kāyastha officials, literary persons, saints and soldiers. They refer to a ruler such as Śrīdharadāsa (author of the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* and composer of the Andhrāṭhārhī inscription), Ratnadeva, Sūryakara (who helped Harisiṃha in the compilation of the kāyastha *pañjī*), Bodhidāsa (a saintly man), Amṛtakara and Amiya ṃkara (literary persons and poets mentioned by Vidyāpati), Rauta Rajadeva, Gopāla Mallick, Kēśava Majumdār (as is known to us from the *pañjī*) and others. Vidyāpati preserves the names of many of his contemporaries. In the *Kīrtilatā* he mentions Ānanda Khān, one of the ancestors of the Cakawāras (landed Bhūmihārs spread over "twelve villages" in Begusarai subdivision of Monghyr district). It was in the court of Droṇawāra Purāditya that he wrote his *Likhanāvalī* and copied the manuscript of the *Bhāgavata,* which is still preserved in the Raj Library, Darbhanga. Several contemporary figures are also mentioned in the *Kīrtipatākā*.

V

Jyotirīśvara refers to the traditional two categories in the lowest rung of social order, namely, *aniravasita* (the non-excluded) and the *niravasita* (the excluded). The latter were outside the pale of Hindu society, and are equated with the *mandajātiyas.* Jyotirīśvara's picture of the social classes is an index of contemporary Mithila. The economic lot of the common man was far from satisfactory. Thatched houses, earthen cooking vessels and a broken bedstead were the only valuable possessions

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of a poor man. The village was nothing more than an aggregate or a cluster of dilapidated thatched houses. Rains brought miseries to an ordinary peasant or a poor man who had to take shelter under a tree. Ordinary people did not enjoy any security. The vast majority of people were condemned to a life of toil, privation and humiliation. The unprivileged masses hardly participated either in the governmental functions or in the control of production. Artisans, peasants and small merchants were attached to their respective villages even when their masters changed hands. Fiscal divisions were known as *parganas, ṭappas* and *grāmas.*

Village as the unit of economic organization aimed at the coordination of specialized functions. Production was meant for local consumption. Land was the mainstay of economic life, and agriculture was the chief occupation of a large number of people. With the exception of a few craftsmen and servants all were engaged in agricultural production. Besides agriculturists, camāra, sonāra, lohāra, jolāhā, tāntī, tamoulī, and persons belonging to various other crafts and professions formed part of the socio-economic life of the village. Professions had become more and more rigid and hereditary. Though the *karmakāras* could not be asked to perform any ignoble or impure job, a majority of the professional castes were treated as persons belonging to low and despised groups. Urban artisans hardly differed from rural craftsmen. They had no say either in the management or in the method of production. Manufacturers of caps, rope, pottery, drums, instruments, crude arms and agricultural implements, leather-workers, weavers and others belonged to this category. While the peasants and artisans were condemned to a life of poverty, the landed aristocracy, officials and merchants monopolized a major portion of material wealth.

The vaiśyas consisted of merchants, craftsmen, cattle-breeders, cultivators, moneylenders, etc. During the period under review, most of them had been reduced to the status of śūdras, as the latter too had taken to agriculture. Unscrupulous moneylenders took advantage of the ignorant debtors. It appears from the *Likhaṇāvalī* that moneylending was an extensive practice. Vidyāpati's description of the cunning baniyās indicates the exploita-

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tion practised by them. Grain and money could be had on interest from rich peasants and moneylenders. Loans were generally incurred on the occasion of social functions. When the moneylenders had no faith in the loanee, they insisted on security. In almost every village there were merchants, perfume dealers, conchshell dealers, woodcutters, blacksmiths, oil-dealers, sweetmeat-makers and others. The villagers, though divided on caste lines, had to work together on many occasions. Tillers of various castes including the śūdras were encouraged to cultivate barren land on liberal terms. After the land was made cultivable they had to pay one-eighth to the *svāmin* for seven years, after which the latter made alternative arrangements. The tillers were thus debarred from the benefits accruing in the long term.

Those who could not be fully absorbed in Hindu society because of their being very backward were pushed to the position of untouchables. The attitude towards the lower orders differed from person to person and from age to age. Signs of liberalism towards the śūdras are discernible in Medhātithi and Viśvarūpa. Contrary to the rules of Baudhāyana and Manu, Caṇḍeśvara states that even if the parents become outcasts, they are to be obeyed and served. The appellation śūdra came to include a large number of groups of lower orders, and some of them were the most despised and exploited. It is very difficult to draw a line of distinction between the touchables and the untouchables among the śūdras. Among the *mandajātiyas,* Jyotirīśvara includes telī, tāntī, tīvara, turiā, tuluka, dhāṅgala, dhānukha, hāḍi, gonṭha, camāra, goāra, oḍa, suṇḍi, vinda, kādava, nāgara, ḍoma, etc. Ḍomas, niṣādas, and kāpālikas are described as untouchables in the Buddhist *Caryāpadas.* Among the backward classes Vidyāpati mentions goṇḍhī, sahani and dhīvara. He also mentions *haṭṭopajīvī* and *ghaṭṭopajīvī.* The śūdras came to have the largest number of castes. We have in Manu about 61 mixed castes whereas in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* the number shot up to one hundred. There are references to 64 *jātis* in the *Vaijayantī.* Opinions on the status of the śūdras varied from author to author, and whereas Caṇḍeśvara adopts a liberal attitude, Vācaspati Miśra adopts a rigid position. Vidyāpati includes the kaivartas and the dhīvaras in the list of lower castes. Jyotirīśvara speaks of

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a number of criminal tribes and professional vagabonds. The criminal classes formed the lowest rung of the social and cultural ladder.

The depressed and backward classes had no say in social matters. The śūdras and untouchables were the worst affected. The laws were not favourable to them. If a brāhmaṇa reduced a śūdra to slavery the former was exempt from punishment. According to Vācaspati, it was meant simply to depreciate the condition of a śūdra. Harlots, professional dancers, musicians and actors were included in the lower social order, and they were despised and looked down upon as degraded castes in society. The Maithila *nibandhakāras* laid great stress on the duties of every man as a member of the particular caste or class to which he belonged. People stood divided within a narrow caste circle. The duties of a kṣatriya, a vaiśya and a śūdra are enumerated in the *Gṛhastharatnākara* of Caṇḍeśvara. The śūdras were treated as non-entities and were severely punished even for minor offences. They were expected to serve the brāhmaṇas.

VI

Slavery seems to have been one of the recognized social institutions in medieval Mithila though it was not of the western type. Slaves had nothing of their own, and they were completely under their masters. The *Vīramitrodaya* draws a line of distinction between a slave and a servant in the following words:

> When the man surrenders himself absolutely and entirely to the service of his master, he is a slave; when he simply undertakes to serve the master without surrendering himself, he is a servant.

A study of the *Likhanāvalī* reveals to us the pitiable condition of the lower orders. It was their dire poverty which bound them to their masters as the avenues of employment were few. An index of slavery being a developed institution in the middle ages is provided by the existence of a separate muster-master (*majmuadaur=majumdār*) of slaves, and a separate treasury for their allowances. In Mithila a karaṇa kāyastha named Keśava Majumdār, who is mentioned in the kāyastha *pañji*, held this

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office, and after the fall of the Oinwāras usurped power for a years.

From the contemporary literary sources it is evident that slaves, serfs and śūdras were almost synonymous, and there was a regular trade of śūdras and slaves. People invested money in the purchase of śūdras; the whole family was purchased and the deal was certified by witnesses. These śūdras acted as *dāsas* or slaves or servants. Vidyāpati in his *Kīrtilatā* and *Likhanāvalī* refers to the sale and purchase of slaves. Various persons were reduced to slavery for crimes and debts. Misaru Miśra and Vācaspati Miśra refer to four classes of slaves: born or hereditary, purchased (during the famines), acquired (during the war) and inherited from ancestors. There were also others who agreed to become slaves for the sake of food and maintenance. Even after being freed from slavery people continued to be slaves for their livelihood. Śūdras were also pledged to their masters, and along with slaves and serfs they were known as *bahiyās*. There are references to the outraging of modesty and unnatural offences in connection with members of the lower orders. The slaves were treated as the personal property of the master, who exploited them for domestic comforts; they had nothing to do with producing activities. They were bound in chains even for nominal offences. Members of the lower orders sold themselves to those of the upper classes, and they had to serve for life according to the terms agreed upon at the time of pledging. However, food was guaranteed to them by their masters.

At times the question of the actual ownership of slaves led to title suits. We know of one such case having been actually considered by the law court of Mithila, and we have a copy of the judgement delivered by Justice Sacal Miśra. This lawsuit relating to the ownership of the slave was tried as late as Śaka 1716/A.D. 1794, which shows how deep-rooted the system was. In support of his judgement Sacal Miśra has quoted from Misaru Miśra and Harinātha Upādhyāya. We have three other documents dated Śaka 1537/A.D. 1615, L. Sam 528/A.D. 1647 and L. Sam 549/A.D. 1668 pertaining to the sale of slaves. From the first document we learn that a slave could be freed on payment of the price at which he was purchased. The two other

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documents show that the slave girls were treated as virgins at the time of transfer. These girls were let off for marriage on payment of a particular sum to the master. Aparārka holds that a slave girl becomes free if she is married to a master or if she has some sexual connections with him; in the latter case she is married to him. At times the slave girls were married to the slaves of their masters. *Bahiyās* came under the same category. Since they had no property of their own they were exempted from fines. But they had to serve the interests of their masters, who did not hesitate to use their wives as objects of lust. A slave had no social standing. Caṇḍeśvara, Misaru Miśra, Vācaspati and others state that a master begetting a son on his female slave shall release them both provided the master has no other son.

The lower orders constituted the majority in society and were collectively called śūdras. The *Vivādacintāmaṇi* contains a chapter relating to labourers, servants and slaves. The sweeping of the gateway, of the privy, of the road, of the dumping ground, shampooing the secret parts of body, removing food leavings and ordure, rubbing of the master's limb, etc. were considered low work, and these were to be done by the slaves. The undermentioned duties had to be performed by the lower orders:

i) tilling of land;
ii) cleansing utensils and sweeping the quarters;
iii) bringing water;
iv) carrying palanquin; and
v) doing such work as was assigned by the master.

The unspeakable dire poverty of the common people forced them to be bound to their masters for life and do all sorts of odd jobs. According to Vidyāpati. the chief possession of a poor man (caste notwithstanding) was his misery. Forced by circumstances and pressure of poverty the lower classes took recourse to bad means of living, as a result of which they were described as criminal classes by Jyotirīśvara. Castes and sects were advised to follow the traditional path of unquestioned obedience, as that attitude alone was considered righteous. Economic inequality led to the establishment of a resigned social attitude,

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which killed the initiative of a large mass of workers. Persons of means were advised to shun the company of the poor who were branded as devoid of wisdom. The idea of *dharma* was propagated to promote contentment among the people, whose initiative was not allowed to take shape. The social scheme envisaged the unconditional acceptance of the path of *dharma* which in turn meant the performance of prescribed duties by the respective castes. People were asked to suffer the present evil in the hope of future gain, and the institution of caste held out such hopes.

The poor and unsophisticated were described as *gamāra* (or rustics). We have an example of the distinction in both Jyotirīśvara and Vidyāpati. A village was called *gāma* and a city *nagara*. Rustics were known as *kugāma* and *gamāra*, and the townspeople were known as *nāgara* but it is not clear whether this term included the people of lower orders living in towns. The villagers lacked the sophistication of town dwellers. On seeing a woman the rustics played tricks like jumping across the well, ascending tree-tops, overturning bullock carts, and singing in a low voice. Bribery, corruption and illegal gratification were not unknown to the townspeople. The common man, no matter to whatever caste he belonged and wherever he lived, had to pass through various economic odds. All the opponents of the orthodox social system were declared heretics. The distinction between the upper and the lower classes was so marked that even beauty was considered to be the chief preserve of the rich and the honoured caste, and Vidyāpati testifies to it in his *Puruṣaparīkṣā* (tale No. 6).

VII

Caste considerations influenced the administration of law and justice. A lower caste was to be punished for offending a brāhmaṇa, who enjoyed special privileges. The assistance to the *vṛṣalas* (identified as śūdras) is ruled out in the investigation of lawsuits. Members of the lower social orders suffered from obvious legal difficulties in relation to members of the higher orders. In medieval Mithila a large number of cases arose out

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of the sale, purchase and possession of *bahiyās*, slaves and serfs, and in all such cases slaves and serfs felt helpless. However, Vardhamāna, a law commentator, recognized the importance of artisans and other producing classes. He recommended that artisans and craftsmen should not be deprived of their tools. He also advised punishment for blackmarketeers and profiteers, and cautioned people against the cheats (*prakāśataskarās*), but we do not know whether these recommendations were observed.

On the whole medieval Mithila does not present a happy society. On the one hand we notice all the evils of the luxurious courts, and on the other the outcry of shocking poverty. The contemporary literature is replete with references to the pitiable condition of the common man and the lower orders. It refers to forced labour known as *begāra*. We notice a general social and economic degradation of persons belonging to the lower orders. The *nibandhakāras* looked upon the traditional social system as the only guarantee for social stability. The nobles in alliance with the soldiery took advantage of the situation and exploited the common man. Though new caste rules and alignments are discernible, they were meant to sustain the existing social framework in its essentials. Violation of caste rules involved social ostracism, and a casteless person became homeless and hearthless. He had to face economic hardship, which also befell the lot of most lower caste people. Vidyāpati realized the evils of poverty and advised the king to wage war against it, but his advice went unheeded.

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Merchants in Western India in the Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries

SURENDRA GOPAL

At the dawn of the sixteenth century a prosperous business community was well-established on the western coast of India. The port of Cambay[1] situated in Gujarat in the north and Calicut on the Malabar coast in the south were the two focal points, where not only the indigenous merchants but also voyagers from abroad, such as the east coast of Africa, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf region, and even from South-East Asia, gathered to exchange their goods. The traders of the western coast of India in fact shared and dominated the sea-borne trade of the sector along with the Arabs. This fact was highlighted when the Portuguese appeared in the Indian waters in 1498 and let loose a reign of terror disrupting the entire commerce of the area.[2]

The Arab and the Gujarati traders, who happened to suffer most on account of the arrival of the Portuguese, immediately took steps to undermine the foreigners. Both incited the local rulers against the newcomers. The Arabs advised the Calicut ruler to refuse hospitality to Vasco da Gama, while the Gujaratis did the same in Malacca.[3] But within a decade the Portuguese

1. Nikitin who was in India between 1469-72 wrote: "Cambay is the landing port of India".

2. Throughout the period of their domination over the Indian seas the Portuguese never completely gave up their policy of capturing Indian ships and looting coastal cities.

3. *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires*, ii (London, 1944), 255, 279.

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had established their armed superiority over the seas around India by controlling vantage points on the established trade-routes like Socotra, Ormuz, Goa and Malacca. The Portuguese, while conscious of their strength, also realized the futility of continuing the policy of plunder and rapine on the high seas, which scuttled commerce and ultimately caused financial loss by depriving them of revenues that could have accrued to them through customs. Hence after a reappraisal they allowed the Indian traders to participate in the sea-trade provided they did not visit eastern Africa or trade in certain specified articles and paid a licensing fee. Thus the Portuguese had changed the structure of the sea-trade not only of India but also of the whole region.[4]

The Indian traders adjusted themselves to the changed situation. The Portuguese made their possession, Goa, the main mart on the western coast, and both Cambay and Calicut lost their primacy. For historical reasons the Portuguese attitude to the Muslim traders, especially the Arabs, was hostile.

Although the Gujarati Sultans had initially called the Egyptian and Turkish fleets for help against the Portuguese, they were more or less reconciled by the forties to their hold, while the Muslim Sultanates of the Deccan kept up their opposition. In 1570 a grand coalition of the Deccan Muslim powers tried unsuccessfully to capture the Portuguese port of Goa. Under the circumstances, the Gujarati traders, who included a sizable number of Jains and Hindus, found it easier to come to terms with the Portuguese, with the result that they became the premier indigenous trading community along the entire western coast of India as well as in the markets of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.[5]

4. W. H. Moreland, *India at the Death of Akbar* (Delhi, 1962). pp. 187-88.

5. The accounts of Linschoten and Pyrard Laval confirm this impression. According to Linschoten there was a special street of Gujarati merchants in Goa, *The Voyage of John Huyghan Van Linschoten*, i (London, 1885), 208. According to Laval, from Cambay fleets came to Goa twice or thrice a year. Each fleet had from 300 to 400 ships, *The Voyage of John Francis Pyrard Laval*, ii, 245. On page 246 he writes: "There are but few of the inhabitants of Goa, whether Christians or others, that have

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The Gujarati merchants also became the chief traders in the Portuguese ports of Goa, Chaul[6] and Diu[7], which controlled the import and export business of western India. Towards the end of the sixteenth century there was a street full of Gujarati merchants in the market of Goa. Their great prosperity can be gauged from the fact that a contemporary Jain text describes the shop of a Gujarati merchant as topped with a golden *kalaśa*.[8] The Gujarati traders became active in the Red Sea region where the Portuguese were unable to establish their military superiority.[9]

However, this should not beguile us into believing that the Gujarati traders benefited and prospered owing to the coming of the Portuguese. As a matter of fact if their entire range of operation in sea-trade both before and after the coming of the Portuguèse is taken into account, the general impression is that their area of trade contracted. The Portuguese authorities permitted the Gujaratis to participate in sea-trade but imposed severe restrictions on them. As regards the volume of foreign sea-borne trade conducted by the Gujarati and other Indian merchants on the western coast of India, no definite opinion can be given in the absence of statistical data. But in view of the contracting sphere of trade and the restrictions placed by the Portuguese, it may have dwindled. The apparent prosperity of the Gujarati traders was no compensation either for the decline suffered by their compatriots down the coasts or their own brisk business prior to the Portuguese arrival. The Indian mercantile class suffered a setback at a time when its European counterparts were getting stronger day by day.[10] This meant

not a share in this fleet, or at least in some of the ships at Goa and the other ports of the Portuguese; for along with this fleet come many ships from Cambay, Surat and other places."

6. Munirāj Śrī Vidyā Vijay Jī, *Surīśwar aur Samrāṭ Akbar*, tr. (Hindi) Krishna Lal Varma (Agra, Vir Samvat 2450), p. 262. A Jain trader built a temple in Chaul.

7. Ibid. pp. 213, 256. A Jain trader Abhayarāga is said to be the owner of four ships.

8. Ibid. pp. 250, 253.

9. The account of the English sailor Jourdain confirms this.

10. For a brilliant description of the merchant class in England see

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a check to its emergence as the potential rival of the feudal class in Indian society.

The course of events forced the Indian mercantile class on the west coast to value Portuguese friendship not only for its prosperity but also for sheer survival, and bonds of friendship began to be forged. The Gujarati traders, at one time the staunchest opponents, became the closest and most willing allies. As a result the Jain Gujarati traders were granted freedom of religion in the Portuguese possessions in India.[11] An incident is revealing in this connection. Two Christians were arrested in the streets of Surat by local authorities on a charge of spying. The local "Vanianes" (Jains) were willing to secure their release by paying a ransom of one thousand gold pieces on the spot.[12] Thus it was the mercantile community of western India and not the Indian rulers who first accepted the foreign domination of their economy. The mercantile community of western India set a precedent for co-operation with the European traders and adjusted itself to their penetration.

It was in such a situation that the Dutch and the English arrived in the Indian waters at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Indian traders welcomed them as a counterpoise to the Portuguese monopoly and also as relief from Portuguese restrictions. The western Indian merchants cultivated the newcomers. The following incident confirms this contention. In 1610 the English ships were seized by the governor of Mocha.[13] The Shah Bandar of the port, who was also the chief of the Indian trading community residing there, interceded on behalf of the English and secured their release.[14]

Richard Grassby, "English Merchant Capitalism in the Late Nineteenth Century", *Past and Present*, no. 46 (February 1970), 87-108.

11. *Surīśwar aur Samrāṭ Akbar*, p. 262.

12. *The Commentary of Father S. J. Monserrate* (London, 1922), p. 189.

13. Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (Glasgow edition), iii, 131.

14. Ibid. p. 142. This shows that the mercantile community of the western coast of India played an important role in shaping the economic policies of the Red Sea area. Its talent and experience were used by the authorities of this region.

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The Indian mercantile community soon realized that it had miscalculated. The Dutch and the English turned out to be more serious trade rivals and not less ruthless than the Portuguese in enforcing their economic policies.[15] The Dutch began to systematically drive out Indian traders, especially those belonging to Gujarat and the Malabar coast, from South-East Asia, the centre of spice trade. The Dutch effort was resisted in the main by the Gujarati traders, who were the chief business group and also the subjects of the most powerful ruler in India. At last a compromise was arrived at because the resources of the Dutch were insufficient to establish monopoly. The Indian traders agreed to operate to the extent the Dutch permitted.

The story was repeated in the case of the English, who directed their main efforts towards entering the markets of the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. The Indian mercantile community supported the English in the Persian Gulf in the hope of the demolition of Portuguese monopoly,[16] but they opposed the English tooth and nail in the Red Sea trade. The Gujaratis were in the forefront and they even incited the Mughal rulers.[17]

For the first time the external trade of the Europeans was accompanied by their participation in internal markets. This was used by the Indians as a lever to extract concessions and to resist the European penetration into their economy. The Indians took to denying the Europeans marketing and purchasing facilities as well as withholding loans badly needed by the foreigners. In extreme cases even the arrest of the Europeans was ordered by the local authorities.[18] In this case again the end result was the establishment of British commercial supremacy and the Indian acquiescence in it. Thus the Portuguese domination was

15. On several occasions the English and the Dutch held Indian ships on high seas to enforce their demands. Many times they also blockaded the ports of western India to extort commercial concessions from the local authorities.

16. William Foster (ed.), *The English Factories in India*, 4 volumes (Oxford, 1906-27, hereafter abbreviated as *EFI*), 1618-21, pp. 278, 300.

17. Ibid. p. 118. In 1619 the Mughal emperor refused permission to the English to trade between Gujarat and the Red Sea.

18. *EFI*, 1634-36, pp. 190-91; *EFI*, 1661-64, p. 12.

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eliminated, but western Indian traders had simply exchanged two masters for one.

So there was another reappraisal on the part of the Indian business community. Pelsaert found hatred for the Europeans among all sections of the Gujarati merchants for the economic losses they had suffered.[19] Decline of the external sea-trade also meant a loss to Indian shipowners. This is even admitted by W. H. Moreland. The capital of the Indian businessmen was being denied avenues of investment in the traditional sectors. Hence they began looking for new fields.

Internal Trade

The new avenues were moneylending to the Europeans, and they started investing in speculative dealings such as insuring goods in transit, on both land and sea. They became the brokers of the Europeans, procuring for them goods from the market and craftsmen. The transformation of the Indian mercantile community into comprador agents of the foreign trading companies was an important feature of the seventeenth century.[20] The documents of the European trading companies abound in such examples. Thus the role of the Indian merchants in internal markets underwent an important change.

Formerly the merchants had a fixed role. They distributed the goods imported in the port towns either by them or by others. But now they were required to be much more active and had to interfere with the production system. The European companies were required to make purchases through them because of their ignorance of local usages and practices and also sometimes because of their inability to muster enough capital.[21] The

19. Francisco Pelsaert, *Jahangir's India*, tr. Moreland and Geyl (Cambridge, 1925), p. 20.

20. As a result of the growing European penetration and competition there appears to have been a shrinkage in the number of Indian merchants engaged in external sea-trade. Only the very rich, such as Virji Vora, could stay in this. But this was possible only because they supplied credit to the Europeans and distributed their goods in the internal markets of India.

21. Such instances are numerous. For example, the English were forced to borrow money from the famous Surat merchant Virji Vora to keep their trade with Iran going, *EFI*, 1646-50, pp. 88, 105.

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European companies, as the century proceeded, began to sell their imported goods in the interior of Gujarat, the Konkan and Malabar coasts. As compared to local merchants, they were often in an advantageous position for they generally received exemption from the payment of various vexatious local dues. Thereby they adversely affected the business of indigenous merchants.

The Indian merchants had no option but to accept the new situation because their capital was beginning to be idle owing to ouster from foreign trade and unequal competition in internal trade. They became the tools in European hands for exploiting the Indian craftsmen. These brokers extracted their commissions from the craftsmen as well as from the European companies.[22] They charged exorbitant interest on the advances made to the craftsmen. Any dereliction by the craftsmen either in the delivery of the contracted articles in time or in quality was a further excuse for these traders to make some gains at their cost.[23] Consequently the craftsmen continued to slide into poverty. They had been first forced to lose their option of markets, then the option to select the quality and quantity of goods they wanted to produce, and ultimately they were deprived of instruments of production. The craftsmen thus found themselves obliged to sell their labour to earn a living.[24]

The character of Indian traders underwent a significant change. As the comprador agents of the Europeans their investment pattern had been altered; they even started insuring the transport of goods, by land and sea, both inside and outside the country. The available information indicates that goods between Iran and Surat,[25] as also from Agra to Gujarat,[26]

22. *EFI*, 1634-36, p. 265.

23. The English discovered how their Indian agent Somiji Chitta defrauded the craftsmen as well as the company. He did not pay the craftsmen the amount due to them. He made a part of the payment in copper coins, instead of in silver coins, as stipulated. Instead of taking 1 per cent commission from the craftsmen, he took 12 per cent commission, *EFI*, 1661-64, p. 112. The Indian agents were actually merchants, money-changers and moneylenders combined in one.

24. *EFI*, 1646-50, pp. 68, 127; *EFI*, 1668-69, p. 92.

25. Ibid. p. 253.

26. *EFI*, 1655-60, p. 121.

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were insured. Even goods sent from one place within the province to another were insured.[27] Although the practice indicates the insecure conditions then prevailing, it also marks an important stage in the development of the trade organization in India. At the same time it is apparent that the Indian merchants were compelled to put their money in unproductive and risky affairs. We have instances of Indian merchants advancing money to traders for sending ships laden with goods to foreign countries. In case the ships returned after a successful trip, the loan was to be repaid with a fixed interest. If there was a mishap or a loss, the loan was not to be refunded.[28] The rate of interest for ships going to China was 25 per cent and the rate of interest for ships going to Manila was from 40 to 45 per cent.[29] These examples demonstrate that the Indian mercantile community did not lack the finance, organization or capacity to do well and prosper as businessmen. Unfortunately the coming of the Europeans and the methods adopted by them prevented them from realizing their full potentialities and playing their historic role. In the trying circumstances, one has to admire their "staying powers".

The Indian merchants tried to make up for the loss of sea-trade by extending their activities in the inter-provincial land trade even in the face of stiff competition from the Europeans and other unfavourable circumstances. A colony of Gujarati traders was well established in Agra, then the nerve-centre of north Indian trade.[30] They could be found in the markets of Bengal bidding for silk.[31]

Driven away from foreign trade the community lost the vital source of capital accumulation. Even in internal markets it was unable to control and direct the rhythm of production. Thus a

27. *EFI* (Oxford, 1936), 1670-77, pp. xvi, 195, 204. Owing to disturbed conditions the English decided to insure all their goods transported on land, *EFI* (Oxford, 1954), 1678-84, p. 293.
28. Ovington, *A Voyage to Surat in the Year 1689*, p. 228.
29. *EFI*, 1668-69, p. 195.
30. *Sureśwar aur Samrāṭ Akbar*, p. 83.
31. *The Diaries of Streynsham Master*, ii (London, 1911), 321.

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combination of factors rendered it incapable of undermining the prevalent feudal system of production and transforming itself into the capitalist class.

Politics

The mercantile class held the strings of economic power but it seldom took an active part in politics. Rarely do we find successful merchants being appointed to important positions in the state, as was sometimes the case on the Coromandal coast, where Mīr Jumlā, a big trader who later defected to the Mughals, was the chief minister of Golkunda.[32] But the indirect influence of the mercantile community in politics was considerable, and its interests and opinions could not be ignored by the local rulers. The contemporary accounts record clashes between the foreigners and the Indian rulers and the consequent interruption of the external sea-trade. The traders, for whom peace was essential, required the cessation of hostilities and mediated between the warring parties. When the Portuguese had only just arrived at the turn of the sixteenth century and were by their piracy gravely affecting the sea-trade, the Gujarati merchants conducted the negotiation of peace. In 1514 Albuquerque made a Gujarati merchant his nominee.[33] Similarly, in the time of Akbar a Cambay merchant helped the Mughals to secure a Portuguese pass for journey to Mecca.[34] Again, the local traders could sometimes force the authorities of Surat and even the Mughal ruler Jahāngīr to issue a *firman* prohibiting the sale of goods to the English, because it affected their interests. For similar reasons restrictions were placed on English imports.[35] A threat of boycott by the local traders also prevented the authorities from enforcing their arbitrary decisions. Eight thousand Hindu traders of Surat left for Broach in 1668 as a protest against the discriminatory religious and

32. Tapan Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel 1605-90* (The Hague, 1962), p. 46; W. H. Moreland, *India from Akbar to Aurangzeb* (London, 1923), p. 102.
33. M. S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, i (Bombay, 1938), 350.
34. Ibid. ii (Bombay, 1957), 12.
35. *EFI*, 1618-21, pp. 92, 125, 185.

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economic measures of Aurangzeb. As a result the whole range of trading activities came to a dead stop. The authorities were forced to implore the Hindus to come back, who returned after obtaining promises of better behaviour in future.[36] In 1672 the mercantile community of Broach left for Surat as a mark of protest against the oppression of the local authorities. Once again the governor personally went to Surat to beseech them to return.[37]

But probably the most notable example of the importance attached to the mercantile community is the treatment meted out to the Jains, the leading business community of the area, by the successive Mughal emperors. From Akbar onwards the Jain traders were accorded special treatment, and all the later Mughals, including Aurangzeb, granted *firmans* to this community, which guaranteed it freedom of worship according to its faith, protection to its places of pilgrimage, and liberty to administer them in accordance with its own wishes without interference from the Mughal authorities who were instructed to render it all possible assistance in the conduct of its business.[38]

On the whole, however, the feudal hold was inescapable. Whenever any ruler made up his mind to ruin a trader, there was no way of stopping him. This is well illustrated by the fate of Virji Vora, the leading merchant of Surat. He was put into prison because he had incurred the displeasure of the local authorities.[39] He was no doubt released later, but the fact remains that the merchants had to live at the pleasure of the local authorities. The merchant community was unable to stand up to the feudal lords, whose position in politics it failed to undermine.

Social Life

Social constraints also proved an important factor in preventing the mercantile community from transforming itself into

36. *EFI*, 1968-69, pp. 190, 192, 205.
37. *EFI*, 1670-77, pp. 229, 232, 235.
38. M. S. Commissariat, *Imperial Mughal Farmans in Gujarat* (Bombay, 1940).
39. *EFI* 1637-41, pp. xvi, 108.

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a full-fledged capitalist class. The majority of the indigenous merchants were either Jains or vaiśyas. The former were wedded to the cult of non-violence. There were instances of vaiśyas and Jains inter-marrying with each other, with the result that the former also became converts to the ideology of non-injury to living beings. This cult received further impetus when Vaiṣṇavism, as preached by Vallabhācārya and his son Viṭhalanātha,[40] spread among the vaiśyas. The merchants were so strict in following the creed of non-violence that they did not deal in horses, one of the most profitable commodities of trade. The renunciation of violence in any form by the majority of tradesmen should explain their lack of armed resistance to the nobility. This was in marked contrast to the conduct of the traders in the Deccan, who kept private armies[41] and were ready to use armed might to safeguard their interests. Thus when Chinanna, a middleman, fell out with the Dutch factors in 1645, he collected an army and besieged them at Pulicat.[42] The Coromandal merchants sent armed escorts with ships bound for foreign lands.[43] In this way, the merchants on the west coast differed qualitatively from their compatriots in the south.

Religion occupied a very high place in the life of Jain and vaiśya traders. This was partly because mere success in business did not win social recognition. To earn social acclaim they had to be equally active in the religious affairs of the community. Virji Vora, the merchant prince of Surat, gave away large sums of money in charity. In his old age he became a monk.[44] Similarly, Śānti Dāsa, the great merchant from Ahmedabad, constructed a grand temple and spent lavishly on religious ceremonies.[45] Guided by religious considera-

40. Viṭhalanātha visited Gujarat thrice, M. S. Commissariat, *Imperial Mughal Farmans in Gujarat*, p. 24.
41. Tapan Raychaudhuri, op. cit., pp. 42, 59.
42. Ibid. p. 52.
43. Ibid. p. 123.
44. K. H. Kamdar, "Sadāvrata" (in Gujarati), *Vinela Moti*, v, no. 1 (Baroda, November 1968), 126, 128.
45. M. S. Commissariat, *A History of Gujarat*, ii, 140-41.

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tions the merchants promoted art, literature and education.

Although European visitors to India in the seventeenth century state that local traders concealed their wealth to escape the covetous eyes of local authorities and lived shabbily, the fact seems to be otherwise. The wealthy were too well-known and the fact of their affluence could not be a secret. Ovington specifically mentions that the best house in Surat belonged to a Parsi merchant.[46] It is obvious that profuse spending on religious functions would reveal their wealth.

The merchants gained in social status by patronizing religion in various ways, but their intense attachment to it relegated business activities to a secondary position after a certain level of success had been achieved. What is more important, in doing so they invested wealth in a sector which brought no returns. This naturally retarded capital formation and hindered the rise of capitalism.

One more fact deserves to be noted in connection with the social attitudes of the mercantile community. Under the spell of the caste system of the Hindus the merchants did not have any social intercourse with the craftsmen. There is only one instance when the Jain merchants at Burhanpur are said to have built places of worship in the locality of copper-smiths.[47] The wide gulf prevented the merchants from entering into a meaningful dialogue with the producers. They remained ignorant of the processes of production and never took any interest in the promotion of technology. In this they lagged behind their counterparts in Europe, who showed a lively interest in the introduction of technological innovations.

In short, social constraints impeded the transformation of the mercantile community into a western-style capitalist class in western India. The Parsi community formed one important exception. It crystallized as a business group in the second half of the seventeenth century. It was unencumbered by the limitations imposed on the vaiśyas and Jains. It had no caste sys-

46. op. cit., p. 231.
47. Siddhichandra Upadhyaya, *Bhānucandra Carita* (Calcutta, 1941). p. 45.

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tem, no ideological affinity with the creed of non-violence. Above all, it had sprung from a class of peasants and craftsmen and the links were not snapped even after it had taken to commercial activities. Therefore, the Parsis emerged as the first western-style capitalist class not only in western India but also in the entire sub-continent.

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Shivaji and the Maratha Landed Elements

SATISH CHANDRA

A great deal of attention has been paid by Indian scholars in recent years to analysing the character, composition and role of *zamīndārs* during medieval times.[1] The new insight gained on several important points has deepened the understanding of the social, political and administrative problems of the period. In the case of Maharashtra we are fortunate in having a large number of Marathi and Persian documents, many of them from the pre-Shivaji and the Shivaji periods. Many of these documents have already been published. A comparison of these documents with their Mughal counterparts may be of use in re-examining some current notions regarding Shivaji's policy towards the landed elements and officials in Maharashtra.[2] The present paper is meant to be a preliminary step in this direction.

Unlike medieval Europe, the "nobility" in India was never a legal category. The medieval Indian writers had of course definite notions about it. High birth, hereditary connection with land, high office in the royal service, a certain code of conduct which included good breeding and manners, a certain style of

1. See in particular I. Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay, 1963), pp. 136-89; S. N. Hasan, "The Position of the Zamindars in Mughal India", *The Indian Social and Economic History Review*, i, no. 4 (1964), 107-19; B. R. Grover, "Nature of Land Rights in Mughal India", *ISEHR*, i, no. 1 (1964), 1-23; "The Position of Desai in the Pargana Administration of Subah Gujarat under the Mughals", *Procs. IHC*, xxiv (1961), 150-54.

2. An exhaustive study of the voluminous documentary material on the subject is a desideratum.

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living, bravery in the field of battle, and the background of traditional learning—these are some of the points emphasized by medieval Muslim writers in their conception of nobility. The attitude of Hindus in this connection was not far different.[3] The author of the *Ajñāpatra* considers ownership and control of land as the principal deciding factor. He states that there were 96 noble families in Maharashtra, consisting of *deshmukhs, deshkulkarnīs,* etc., who were autonomous chiefs and "partners in the kingdom, as it were".[4]

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the most prominent elements in Maharashtra, both socially and politically, were the *watandārs* and the *sardārs*. The bigger *watandārs* held the positions of *deshmukhs* or *desais, deshpandes* or *deshkulkarnīs, muqaddams,* etc. The *sardārs* were persons who had a military following. Many of the *sardārs* had been enrolled in the service of the Deccani states as loose auxiliaries (*bārgīrs*). Apart from plundering the enemy territories, they received as their salaries assignments of land revenue, generally called *"muqāsa"* (Marathi: *mokāsa*).[5] Thus the right to share in land revenue on the basis of hereditary title and/or on behalf of the state constituted the principal means of livelihood for these sections.

With the break-up of the Bahmanid empire and the growing pressure of the Mughals upon the Deccani states, the process of assimilation of the *deshmukhs, desais,* etc., into the politico-

3. Apart from Barani, *Fatāwa-i-Jahāndārī*, Advice vi, see *Ā'īn* ii, Jarrett 2nd edn. pp. 56-58, *Gwāliyar Nāmah*, B. M. Add 16, 859 (A. M. U. Rotograph) ff. 69a-99b; and the various *Akhlāqs* such as *Akhlaq-i-Jauhari*, *Akhlāq-i-Jahāngīrī*, etc. For Hindu ideas, see in particular *Ajñāpatra*, Sec. iii, vi.

4. The craftsmen of various types were excluded, but the very wealthy merchants were sometimes included in the "aristocracy". We do not find any reference to such wealthy Maratha merchants during the seventeenth century. *Ajñāpatra* of Ramchandra Pant, ed. K. N. Sane, Sec. vi (Bombay, 1929). In Maharashtra the task of establishing new markets was entrusted to a *seth* or a *mahājan*. Such persons were entitled to a separate *watan* or *shetepan*, *Peshwa Daftar*, ii. 134-35: viii. 223: vii. 284-85: Sen, *Administrative System of the Marathas* (2nd edn. Calcutta, 1925), pp. 331-35.

5. For the position of the *watandār* or hereditary assignees of land-revenue, see *Ajñāpatra*, Secs. vi-vii. For *mokāsa* see fns. 31, 32.

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military structure of the Deccani states was speeded up. Malik 'Ambar was by no means the first to initiate this policy. The policy is associated with Burhān Nizām Shāh (1508-53), who, it is said, appointed a brāhmaṇa, Kanwar Sain, a Peshwa, and in whose reign the brāhmaṇas acquired great influence in the state. Ibrāhīm 'Ādil Shāh (1534-57) started the practice of maintaining revenue records in Marathi and kept a force of 30,000 Marathas as *bārgīrs*.[6] The old Maratha families of the area, the Morays, the Nimbalkars, etc., also received many favours from the ruler. Malik 'Ambar carried this policy a step further. He took a close interest in the affairs of the Maratha *watandārs*. The family records of many *deshmukhs* and *desais* prove that Malik 'Ambar played an important role in their rise and in resolving their mutual disputes. Among the families which rose into prominence during Malik 'Ambar's period as a result of the general policy of allying with the local elements was the family of Shahji Bhonsle. The Bhonsles had some *deshmukhī* rights in the Poona pargana.[7] An important step in their rise was the grant to Shahji in 1622 of the *mokāsa* of the parganas of Sholapur and Poona by Malik 'Ambar.[8] The background to this is interesting. The area from Sholapur to Poona, including the Konkan, had always been a bone of contention between the kingdoms of Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. When Malik 'Ambar entered into an alliance with Ibrāhīm 'Ādil Shāh II in 1607 Sholapur pargana was assigned to Bijapur.[9] The sovereign rights over it were, however, retained by Ahmadnagar, for a number of cases between the *deshmukhs*, *muqaddams*, etc., of the area were referred to the Nizām Shāhī court for decision. A part of the pargana was assigned in *mokāsa* to the Nizām Shāhī nobles.[10]

6. John Briggs, *History of the Rise of Mahomedan Power in India* (tr. from Ferishta's original account in Persian), iii (second Indian Reprint, Calcutta, 1966), 47-48, 134.

7. See J. N. Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, (4th edn., Calcutta, 1948), p. 29.

8. K. V. Purandare, *Shiv Caritra Sāhitya* (hereafter *SCS*), i, no. 21, 35 (*Maḥzar* dated 12B. *Vaishakh Sake* 1545/25 Rajab 1031H/5 July 1622).

9. *Basātīn-us-Salātīn*, Hyderabad, Litho, pp. 263-65.

10. *SCS*, i, nos. 9-21, and Intro. pp. 15-17.

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When Ibrāhīm 'Ādil Shāh broke with Malik 'Ambar, the Bijapuris, led by Murari Pandit and others, overran the entire area up to Poona, including the Konkan. Shahji was asked to help in ousting the 'Ādil Shāhīs, and as a reward was given *mokāsa* in Poona.[11] It was from this time that Shahji rose rapidly. It is typical of the situation that Shahji won his spurs in a successful contest against a brother Maratha.

The *mokāsa* granted to Shahji was not "hereditary", for it was transferable, and we find frequent cases of such transfer in the Deccan kingdom during the period. In practice, however, the Bhonsles soon began to look upon the Poona *"jāgīr"* as hereditary. By 1622, following the break between Bijapur and Ahmadnagar, the unity of the Deccani states against the Mughals had come to an end. An era of mutual strife and Mughal incursions began. In this situation the Maratha *watandārs* found an opportunity to augment their resources and to claim greater independence for themselves. Many of them were courted by the Mughal Emperor with offers of large *manṣabs*. Shahji himself was accorded a *manṣab* of 5,000 by Shāh Jahān in 1629.

By the treaty of 1636 the Mughals annexed the northern part of Ahmadnagar kingdom, the southern part being assigned to Bijapur. In consequence, the Mughals inherited the frontier disputes regarding Sholapur and the Konkan between Ahmadnagar and Bijapur. The *deshmukhs, desais,* etc., found the frontier tract on both sides to be lightly administered as, for the time being, the interests of both the sides lay elsewhere, Bijapur being busy in overrunning the Karnatak and Shāh Jahān being preoccupied with Central Asian affairs. Hence, the *deshmukhs, desais* and the other *mirāsdārs* had the field free to themselves. The resulting situation is described graphically both by Sabhasad and by Ramchandra Pant, the author of the *Ajñāpatra*. Sabhasad states that the *pātils, kulkarnīs, deshmukhs,* etc., "used to do the collection work (*kamavisi*) and

11. *SCS*, i, no. 21, 35; *Basātīn*, pp. 304-5. Later when Shahji unfurled the banner of independence on behalf of Murtaza Nizām Shāh, Murari Pandit was deputed with an army of 20,000 to help Shahji (Lahori, *Pādshāhnāma*, Bibliotheca Indica, ia, 397-98).

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paid what they pleased to the state". Out of their collections they paid only a small part to the government as contribution (*khand*). "In consequence, the *mirāsdārs* grew and strengthened themselves by building bastions, castles (*vade*) and strongholds in the villages, enlisting footmen and musketeers. They never waited on the revenue officer of the government and resorted to fighting if he urged they could pay more. This class had become unruly and seized the country".[2]

Shivaji rose to power against this background. There is a persistent belief, shared by some eminent historians, that Shivaji was opposed to *zamīndārī* or superior rights in land and that he tried to establish direct relations with the peasantry by appointing his own agents to collect land revenue. It has also been said that he was opposed to the *jāgīrdārī* system.[13] A careful study shows both these beliefs to be largely unfounded. In a famous passage Sabhasad describes Shivaji's policy towards the landed elements. He says that Shivaji demolished the bastions, castles and strongholds of the *desais,* and where there were strong forts he posted his own garrison. "Thus no power was left in the hands of the *mirāsdārs*". Even more important, he prohibited "all that the *mirāsdārs* used to take at their sweet will, as gifts (*in'ām*) or by way of revenue-farming (*ijāra*), and fixed the dues of the *zamīndārs* from the villages in cash and grain as well as the rights and perquisites of the *deshmukhs* and the *deshkulkarnīs,* and the *pātil* (and) the *kulkarnī*".[14]

12. Sabhasad, *Bakkhar*, ed. K. N. Sane, p. 30. For *Ajñāpatra*, see Sec. vi.

13. S. N. Sen (*Administrative System of the Marathas*, 2nd edn., Calcutta, 1925, pp. 45, 30) says that Shivaji "made it a rule not to assign any jagir to any officers, civil or military", and that while for reasons of expediency he left the *deshmukhs* in the enjoyment of their old rights, he appointed government agents to collect the land revenue and thus established direct relations with the peasants. See also M. G. Ranade, *Rise of the Maratha Power and Other Essays* (Bombay, 1963), pp. 68-70; G. S. Sardesai, *New History of the Maratha People* (Poona, 1948), iii, 56; Sarkar, op. cit., p. 351; V. T. Gune, *Judicial System of the Marathas* (Poona, 1953), p. 30.

14. Sabhasad, op. cit., p. 30. Sen (op. cit. p. 39) adds the words "according to the yield of the village". But these words do not occur in Sane's text. In any case, we are not told how the yield was assessed. Similarly,

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From this statement two things may be inferred: first, that Sabhasad points out the final result of what Shivaji was able to achieve and shows that this process had inevitably taken a good deal of time and effort on Shivaji's part. The survey of land and the detailed revenue reforms could be carried out only towards the end of Shivaji's reign. Therefore, his tussle with the landed elements occupied almost his entire reign. Secondly, his major conflict was with the bigger *deshmukhs, deshkulkarnīs,* etc., who alone had the resources to build castles and engage armed forces. The experience of the Mughals within their own territories may provide us a clue to the approach adopted by the other medieval rulers in a similar situation. The Mughals classified the land under their control into two sections called *zōr-talab* and *ra'iyyatī*. The *zōr-talab* areas were dominated by a powerful *zamīndār* or a recalcitrant tribe and the collection of land-revenue required military force. Generally, such areas were assigned in *jāgīr* only to the bigger nobles who had a large military contingent at their disposal.[15] Simultaneously the Mughals had attempted to ascertain the actual produce of the soil on the basis of a detailed assessment, and to treat the *zamīndārs* as collectors of land-revenue rather than as autonomous chiefs. Thus they had attempted to convert *pēshkashī* or *ghair 'amlī zamīndārs* into *Kharāzjī zamīndārs*.[16]

Shivaji's policy had obvious parallels with this. While the prerogatives of the bigger *deshmukhs, deshpandes,* etc., were sought to be restricted and brought under strict administrative control by Shivaji, this did not at all imply that in Maharashtra the *zamīndārs* ceased to play an important part in the collection of land revenue. In the *qaulnāma* of 1678 by Annaji Datta the *deshmukhs,* the *deshkulkarnīs,* etc., of Rohidkhore are asked not

Sarkar's statement (op. cit., p. 351) that "their dues were fixed after calculating the (exact) revenue of the village" is not borne out by the Sane text. See also *Ajñāpatra*, Sec. vi, for the character and conduct of the bigger *watandārs*.

15. N. A. Siddiqi, "The Classification of Villages under the Mughals", *ISEHR*, i, no. 3 (1964), 4-5.

16. *Mirāt-i-Ahmadī*, i, 21-22, 173-74, Suppl. Ch. VI, pp. 228-99; N. A. Siddiqi, op. cit., pp. 5-6.

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only to survey the villages and assess the produce but also to collect the produce after their estimates have been proved correct.[17] Socially also the *deshmukhs* and others remained the most important element in the Maratha countryside. Thus no change was effected in the basic social relationships.

Shivaji's contest with the *deshmukhs, desais,* etc., may be divided into a number of phases. The first phase lasted roughly up to 1660 and centred mainly around gaining the allegiance of the Maval *deshmukhs,* thus enlarging and consolidating Shivaji's *jāgīr* around Poona. Although some of the Maval *deshmukhs* were won over by Shivaji through Kanhoji Jedhe, *deshmukh* of Kari, others remained divided in their allegiance till 1660, mainly because of the influence of the Morays of Javli and Baji Ghorpade of Bhor.[18] These powerful *deshmukhs,* who belonged to old families, were interested in safeguarding their own position in the Maval area with the help and support of the Bijapur government. They were not prepared to countenance Shivaji's claim to independence, which would imply a status higher than their own. Shivaji ousted Sambhaji of Supa, though the latter's sister, Tuka Bai, was married to him, and ousted Chandra Rao Moray from Javli. In 1659, when Afzal Khān marched against Shivaji, both these *deshmukhs* joined his (Afzal Khān's) standards. On behalf of Afzal Khān Khandoji Khopde, *deshmukh* of Utroli, won over a number of Maval *deshmukhs* to his side. Even Baji Nimbalkar, *deshmukh* of Phaltan, who is described as "one of the biggest zamindars of the Deccan"[19] and whom Shivaji had reconverted to Hinduism, joined Afzal Khān willy-nilly. Others who joined him included the Savant of Wadi, Bhaskar Krishnaji Kulkarni.[20] Even after the defeat and

17. Rajwade, *Marathanchya Sṭihasanchi Sadhancu* (hereafter *MSS*), xv. 268-70. Documents of a similar purport for the Peshwa period are cited by Sen, op. cit., pp. 279-82, 325-28. The *manpan* or privileges enjoyed by the *deshmukhs, deshpandes, muqaddams,* etc., are set out in detail in a number of documents (See Sen, op. cit., pp. 248-51).

18. Sardesai, op. cit., i, 118-21. See also Sarkar, op. cit., p. 59.

19. Bhimsen, *Dilkusha,* B. M. MS, (A. M. U. Rotograph) ff. 122, 125. In 1673 Baji Nimbalkar went over to the side of the Mughals.

20. Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 43-44, Sardesai op. cit., i, 98, 103-4, 112, 125.

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death of Afẓal Khān all the *deshmukhs* of the area did not rally to Shivaji's side. Babaji Ram Honap, a former *deshpande* of Poona, joined Sīdī Ṣalābat in his siege of Shivaji in Purandar.[21] It was only after 1660, when Sīdī Ṣalābat concluded a truce with Shivaji and retreated to his own *jāgīr* of Karnool, that Shivaji could consolidate his hold on the Maval area.

Even before Shivaji had consolidated his position in and around Poona and the Maval area, his attention had been drawn to the Konkan. In 1657 he had invaded north Konkan and brought it under his control. His policy towards the *deshmukhs* and others in that region is not known. But we are told that many smaller *deshmukhs* of south Konkan invited this rising star.[22] Unlike the *deshmukhs* in the uplands or *desh*, the *deshmukhs* in the Konkan had never fully submitted to Bijapur, and were eager to use Shivaji for their purposes. Common opposition to Bijapur enabled Shivaji to come to terms with the Sīdi of Janjira and the Bhonsles of Kudel between 1657 and 1659. However, in 1661, when Shivaji invaded north Konkan, he had to reckon with the overt and covert hostility of the Hindu and Muslim *deshmukhs*. The raja of Shringarpur and Savant of Wadi, the *deshmukh* of Wai, etc., opposed Shivaji. Even the Savant of Kudel adopted a prevaricating attitude. Shivaji annexed the territories of the Raja of Shringarpur, but he allowed others to continue. However, he imposed *chauth* upon them which was not the case with the *deshmukhs* of the *desh* area.[23] Shivaji failed against the bigger *deshmukhs* at the political level, but at the social level he tried to strengthen his position by marrying into the families of the older noble *deshmukhs*, such as the Shirkes, the Mohites, the Nimbalkars, etc.[24] That Shivaji was able to form these alliances was both a measure of the strong position he had already acquired, and an index of the fact that the Maratha society was a comparatively open society in which a successful military chief and landholder with an

21. *'Ālamgīr Nāmah*, Bibliotheca Indica, p. 584; Sarkar, op. cit., p. 81.
22. Sarkar, op. cit., p. 55.
23. Ibid. p. 83.
24. Sardesai, op. cit., i, 145.

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obscure background could be assimilated with the older "noble" families within a generation or so.

In the second phase, between 1663 and 1674, Shivaji's energies were occupied mainly with meeting and repelling the Mughal invasion of his territories. It is hardly likely that during this period he would have had the opportunity to define his relations with the *deshmukhs* or embark upon new policies. By 1674, however, he entered a new stage. The Mughal invasion of his homeland had failed. Bijapur fell a prey to factional squabbles, and its dismemberment seemed to be imminent. In order to cope with the new situation and place himself in a position to bargain with all parties on an equal footing,[25] and not just as a rebel, Shivaji formally crowned himself in 1674. It also strengthened his position internally in relation to the older *deshmukh* families.

At the time of his coronation Shivaji imposed upon all *watandārs* a special cess called *mirās-pattī* or *singhāsana-pattī*.[26] It would appear that this cess was meant to serve a double purpose: it filled the coffers of the Chhatrapati and also compelled the *deshmukhs, desais,* etc., to formally accept his claim to the status of the sovereign king. On the other hand it also implied that Shivaji duly acknowledged the hereditary right of all those who paid this cess.[27] It was only after this that Shivaji was able to embark upon a detailed assessment of his territories.[28]

25. In his letter to Baji Ghorpade of Mudhol, written in March 1677, Shivaji emphasizes that as an independent ruler he could talk to Qutb Shāh of Golconda on a footing of equality (*Shivaji Souvenir*, p. 146; Sardesai, op. cit., i, 240-41).

26. According to Rajwade (*Aitihāsik Patra Vyavahār*, xvi, fn. p. 12) it was *mirās-pattī*, but came to be called *singhāsana-pattī* as it was levied within six months of his accession.

27. Thus the *deshmukhs, deshpandes,* etc., of Hukeri had been detained in Rajgarh till they paid 10,000 *huns* from Hukeri, and 10,000 *huns* from the other parganas as *chauth* and *khāndānī*. When they agreed to pay the *khāndānī* as *singhāsana-pattī* within one year and four weeks they were released with honour (*SCS*, viii. 3). Evidently, *singhāsana-pattī* was levied from all *watandārs*.

28. Annaji Datta's circular letter regarding revenue assessment was issued only in 1678 (V. K. Rajwade, *MSS*, xv, 368-70). Earlier assessments were probably of a summary character (Ibid. xx, 94-96).

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This was the third and final phase in which Shivaji was in a position to take steps to bring the *deshmukhs* under fuller control. We do not know to what extent Shivaji succeeded in forcing all the *mirāsdārs* to accept a detailed assessment of the land and to put them under the strict supervision of officials appointed by him. Even if he succeeded partially it represented a major achievement.

A careful assessment of Shivaji's policies shows that the aim of establishing direct relations with the peasants by appointing *kārkuns* to collect the land revenue remained largely unfulfilled. The system could only be applied to *khālṣa* (crown) lands, especially to the territories in the uplands (*desh*)[29] which were in the possession of smaller *deshmukhs*. There is ample evidence to suggest that Shivaji was not opposed to hereditary rights in land as such. The *Ajñāpatra*, which represents the ideals of the age, says that "existing watans should be continued.... Whatever has continued to them from the past should not be allowed to increase nor to become less even by a little". But the beneficiaries were to be strictly controlled, and not allowed to quarrel among themselves. The author is strongly opposed to the grant of hereditary preferments (*vritti* or *in'ām*) to royal servants as it made the incumbents lazy and negligent and led to the permanent loss of revenue to the state. Nevertheless, the author says: "It is a sin to resume a *vritti*, however small it may be. Nor should the *vritti* of one person be transferred to another".[30]

It would thus appear that the backbone of Shivaji's movement was represented by the smaller and middle *watandārs* and that it was they who stood to benefit most by his centralizing policy, and by his attempt to curb the overgrown power of the bigger *deshmukhs* and to help and encourage the settlement of land

29. This is suggested by Sabhasad, who says that Shivaji applied his reforms to the *desh* conquered from 'Ādil Shāhīs, Nizām Shāhīs and the Mughals (op. cit., p. 29). The administrative pattern of the south Maratha area dominated by the bigger *watandārs* (later called *jāgīrdārs*) was different, and these *watandārs* retained their importance till 1818. See V. T. Gune, op. cit., p. 28; Ballhatchet, *Social Policy and Social Change in Western India, 1811-1830* (London, 1957), p. 14.

30. *Ajñāpatra*, Secs, vi, vii.

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and the extension and improvement of cultivation. Shivaji's claim to *sardeshmukhī* rights over the entire Deccan should be seen in the background of his conflict with the bigger and older *deshmukhs*. Some of the older families, such as the Nimbalkars and the Shirkes as well as the Bhonsles, had received special privileges from the 'Ādil Shāhī rulers by way of grant to them of *sardeshmukhī* rights. The nature and origin of *sardeshmukhī* rights are not clear. It seems that at first these rights were given to only a few families which had rendered particular services to the rulers.[31] Later, this appears to have become more common, for we find some instances of the grant of *sar-i-muqaddamī* rights over some villages.[32] The claim of Shivaji to the exclusive right to *sardeshmukhī* of the Deccan was thus primarily directed at these older families which had enjoyed special favour with the 'Ādil Shāhī rulers.

Turning our attention to Shivaji's officials, the widespread belief that Shivaji was opposed to the *jāgīrdārī* system is apparently based on Sabhasad. In relation to the military organization of Shivaji, Sabhasad says :

> The *sarnaubat*, the *majumdār*, the *kārkuns*, and the royal officers were paid their salary (*tankhawāh*) by means of *barāts* (orders). The lands cultivated by them were subject to assessment like the fields of the rayats, and the amount of the revenue due was deducted from their pay. For the balance they got *barāts* either on the treasury of the capital or the district. Men serving in the cavalry, the army or the forts were not to be given villages in entirety (*darobast*) as *mokāsa mahals*. They were to be paid by *barāts* on the countryside, and if on the treasury a commission was deducted. None but the *kārkuns* had any authority over the countryside. All payment to the cavalry, the army or the fort establishments were to be made by the *kārkuns*. The grant of *mokāsa* would have created disorder among the rayat, they would have grown in strength and disobeyed the Government collectors; and the growing power

31. K. V. Purandare, *SCS*, vii, 4.

32. E.g., grant of *sarmugaddami* of Tapa Khedewar, Subah Rajapur, to Bhikaji Naik, *SCS*, vii, no. 31, 13 March 1562 S./14 January 1641. For the grant of *sardeshmukhī watan* to his favourite, Ramchandra Nilkanth. by Raja Ram, see *SCS*, vii, 30, 31.

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of the rayats would have led to rebellions at various places. The *mokāsa*-holders and the zamindars, if united, would have become uncontrollable. Therefore, no *mokāsa* was to be granted to anyone.[33]

Diverse interpretations have been put upon the words *mokāsa* and *mokāsa mahals*. *Mokāsa* has been defined as a proprietary right in land, either rent-free or at low quit-rent or on revenue-farming terms, on condition of service.[34] However, the most satisfactory explanation would seem to be to derive it from the Persian word *muqāsama* (v.n. of *qism*) meaning dividing (with another), admitting (him) to a share. It had thus the same meaning as the Arabic word *iqta'* which appears to have been more generally used during the Sultanate and the Bahmanid periods. It is difficult to say when the word *muqāsa* (Marathi *mokāsa*) began to be used. It is used as a synonym of the *iqta'* in the *Burhān-i-Ma'āsir* and other works of the period.[35] It was in general use in the Deccan during the seventeenth century, as is clear from a mass of extant documents.

Although it is possible to identify different types of *mokāsa* tenures,[36] none of them was considered hereditary. Service tenures were transferred fairly often from one noble to another or from a noble to the ruler.[37] The terms *jāgīr* and *khālṣa* were, it seems, rarely used till the conquest of the old Nizām Shāhī area by the Mughals. A few such references are found for the Poona area during the early years of Aurangzeb's reign.[38] The

33. Sabhasad, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

34. Wilson, *Glossary*, pp. 352-53.

35. Wilson's assumption that the term *mokāsa* is irregularly derived from the Arabic *khās* has evidently no basis, linguistically or otherwise. V. T. Gune, op. cit., pp. 12-53, tries to derive *mokāsa* from *mukhasa* in the *Burhān-i-Ma'āsir*. But the actual word in *Burhān-i-Ma'āsir* is "*maqāzāt*" or posts of *qāzīs* (*Burhān*, p. 7).

36. H. Fukazawa, "A Study of the Local Administration of the 'Ādil Shāhī Sultanate (A.D. 1489-1686)", *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*, xiii, no. 2 (Tokyo, June 1963, 60-67).

37. See for example the case of Sholapur of which we have a fairly detailed history till the eighteenth century in *SCS*, vii, no. 7, 33.

38. Thus see *mazhar* dated S. 1590/ A.D. 1668 in the office of the Honap Deshpande, Subah Poona, *SCS*, ii, no. 99, 127-28. The collection of Khān Wālāshān Fakhruddīn Khān, *jāgīrdār*, pargana Poona for 1098 H./

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word *saranjām* too occurs rarely at this period, and in the few documents where it does, it seems to signify the grant of a specified sum of money from a village for the maintenance of troops.[39] Later, in the Peshwa period, the word becomes common. Possibly at first it was meant to signify a grant made by the Peshwa as distinct from the one made by the Maratha king. But in course of time this distinction was erased and the terms *jāgīr, mokāsa* and *saranjām* began to be used as synonyms. Initially, neither *jāgīr* nor *mokāsa* were hereditary. As we have seen, Shahji's *jāgīr* of Poóna was granted in 1622 as *mokāsa* in lieu of his services in ousting Murari Jagdev and the 'Ādil Shāhī troops from the area. Shivaji's activities and the growing weakness of the 'Ādil Shāhī government made it impossible for his *mokāsa* in the Poona area to be resumed or transferred. It is clear that in the rugged mountainous areas of Maharashtra the leading nobles, Marathi, Habshi and Afghans, were already inclined to look upon their *mokāsas* as hereditary.

It is significant that the *Ajñāpatra* deals only with the *watandārs* and those granted a *vritti* or *in'ām*, the rights of both being hereditary. It largely ignores *jāgīr* or *mokāsa*, i.e. non-hereditary grants. One reason for this may be that by the end of the seventeenth century definitely and possibly earlier *mokāsa* and *saranjāms* had come to be considered hereditary.

1610 S./A.D. 1688 for six months is given in a document as Rs. 7,001, *SCS*, ii, no. 101, 130-31. But the word *jāgīr* is used earlier. Thus in a document dated 5 B, *Phāgun* 1549 S./15 January 1628, the *sabnis, jāgīr-(dār)* and *naikwadi* of fort Purandar are asked to settle the villages, *SCS*, vii, no. 13. It is not clear whether the words *jāgīr* and *jāgīrdārs* have the same connotation as the more commonly used words *mokāsa* and *makāsa* or *mokāsaiyāni*.

39. Thus in 1694, *saranjāmī watan* of Visaji Nilkanthrao for 1,500 *huns* was renewed by Raja Ram (*SCS*, iii, no. 405, 8). It is significant that *saranjāms* were already being regarded as *watan* or hereditary grants. See also Wilson's *Glossary*, p. 465, where *saranjām* is regarded as being "for the life of the grantee". Sabhasad (op. cit., pp. 45-49) uses *saranjām, mokāsa* and *jāgīr* interchangeably. Since *jāgīr* or *mokāsa* included payment for the personal expenses of a noble as well as the cost of his contingent *saranjām* cannot be called a military assignment in contradistinction to a *jāgīr*, and hence it cannot be maintained that it was only the military assignment which Shivaji was prepared to grant.

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It would thus appear that the Maratha officials never fully accepted the idea that assignments of land revenue for the service of the state were temporary in character. That being so, and with his own example before him, Shivaji was perhaps reluctant to continue the *mokāsa* system. But in the circumstances in which he was placed, there was no other system readily available to him. We know that he did grant *mokāsa mahals* on occasions. Thus we are told that after the defeat of Afẓal *Khān* "many people were rewarded with the grants of villages in *mokāsa*" and that *mokāsa mahals* were also set apart for the goddess Tulja Bhawani. After the return of Shivaji from Agra, Krishnanji Pant, Kashi Rao and Vishaji Pant were rewarded with the grant of one lakh *huns* as *in'ām*, a salary of 10,000 *huns*, and the grants of *mokāsa mahals*.[40] After the Karnatak expedition, when an agreement was patched up with Santaji (the son of Shahji by a concubine) he was given the command of 1,000 horse in the Karnatak and was granted *mokāsa mahals*.[41]

While these cases do not conclusively establish that Shivaji accepted the *mokāsa* system as it existed, it does raise some doubts as to exactly what aspect of the *mokāsa* system he was opposed to. Perhaps his objection was to *mokāsa* tenures in which a large tract of land was assigned to prominent nobles with full administrative powers. Hence his opposition to the grant of *mokāsa mahals*, i.e. whole parganas (*aarobast*) carrying administrative powers, and his injunction that the *mokāsadārs* be subjected to detailed revenue assessment "like the rayats".[42] If this interpretation be accepted, it would be justifiable to say that in essence Shivaji was attempting to bring the *mokāsa* system in line with the Mughal concept of *jāgīr*. Akbar had decisively defeated the attempt of the Atka Khail to regard *jāgīrs* as non-transferable. Nor were the *jāgīrdārs* normally allowed to exercise administrative powers in their *jāgīrs*. The reforms of Shivaji would have had the same effect if they had succeeded fully. However, he had to reckon with the deep-seated attachment of the Marathas to hereditary grants.

40. Sabhasad, op. cit., pp. 21, 23, 55.
41. Ibid. p. 91.
42. Ibid. pp. 27-28.

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It is not clear whether Shivaji succeeded in establishing the system of cash payments to soldiers. Sabhasad advises that *saranjām* should be given to soldiers who worked hard in campaigns.[43] The *chitnis* was specifically given the responsibility for grant of *mokāsa, saranjām* and *barāts*.[44] The salaries of the various officers indicated by Sabhasad could thus be paid either by a *barāt*, an order on the treasury, or by the grant of a *saranjām* or *mokāsa*.

It has been argued above that Shivaji had no desire either of doing away with the hereditary rights in land or of abolishing the *jāgīr* system. All that he attempted was to restrict the abuse of power and the encroachments made by the *deshmukhs, deshpandes*, etc., upon the privileges of the king. Even this led to a prolonged tussle, particularly with the bigger *deshmukhs*. His attempts to restrict and control the abuse of the *mokāsa* system, to assert his administrative control over the *mokāsas* and to prevent the rise of a new type of hereditary rights in Maharashtra are also significant These measures enabled Shivaji to lay the foundations of a strongly centralized state in Maharashtra. Nonetheless, Shivaji neither wanted nor attempted any fundamental changes in the basic structure of Maratha society. The centralized structure of government created by him lacked any deep foundations. No detailed analysis has been made as yet of the social background of the officials, civil and military, who served Shivaji and rose to prominence under him. From a broad study it appears that the large majority of them were petty *watandārs*, i.e. petty *deshmukhs, deshpandes, muqaddams*, etc.[45] In joining the banner of Shivaji they were motivated by a variety of considerations. The desire for plunder and loot and personal associations with Shivaji appealed to their religious susceptibilities and pride as Marathas. But a very important factor was

43. Ibid. p. 27.

44. See Memorandum regarding the duties of *chitnis* dated regnal year of Shivaji (*Sanads and Treaties*, ed. Mawji Parasnis, pp. 127-30; Sen, op. cit., pp. 65-71).

45. This is based on a partial study of the names of *silāhdārs sūbehdārs*, the commanders of the cavalry and infantry and the chief *kārkuns* and household officers of Shivaji given by Sabhasad, op. cit., pp. 97-99, 103.

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that they were themselves being oppressed and tyrannized by the bigger *deshmukhs,* who in certain measure enjoyed the support and backing of the Bijapur government. Shivaji's conflict with the Bijapur government and with the bigger *deshmukhs* and his attempt to curb the pretensions of the latter were bound to appeal to the smaller *watandārs* who rallied to him.

The state created by Shivaji was thus based on deep-seated contradictions. Neither the material-technological nor the social-ideological framework of the country could provide any basis for such a development. Hence the relations of Shivaji with the Maratha landed elements and the Maratha failure to sustain a centralized political framework for any length of time must be related to the social relations obtaining in the area.

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The Social Distribution of Landed Property in Pre-British India

(A Historical Survey)

IRFAN HABIB

The present paper was especially written for the International Economic History Conference, Munich, August 1965, which had a separate Section on the Social Distribution of Landed Property.

Since the word "Landed Property" may call forth different connotations in different minds, I should perhaps make it clear that I have used it in the broadest sense, conforming in this respect to the guidance given by Professor J. Habakkuk, who was Chairman of the Section. I take it to include all shares claimed by anyone in the produce of the soil, particularly, however, shares in the *surplus* produce (i.e., the portion of the produce beyond the minimum needed for the producer's subsistence). Any rights over the person or labour of the tiller of the soil are also considered forms of landed property. By "distribution" is meant not only territorial distribution (e.g., sizes of land-holdings), but also the distribution of the shares in the surplus from the same land (e.g., shares claimed concurrently by different classes of exploiters).

The paper attempts a historical survey of the changes in the forms and distribution of landed property up to the British conquest. The aim is to sum up the results of the work already done and to indicate points of controversy and problems provoking, as well as awaiting, discussion. It does not pretend, except

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at certain points in its treatment of the medieval period, to provide fresh material based on the writer's own research. In Section I (Ancient India) I have tried to follow scrupulously the interpretations of sources given in modern authorities, and have avoided taking any responsibility on my own shoulders by even citing the original sources (or their translations) where I had access to them.

Unluckily, Professor R. S. Sharma's important book, *Indian Feudalism : c. 300-1200* (Calcutta, 1965), which integrates many of the points he has made in earlier articles, while adding much that is new, came too late for me to put it to adequate use in revising the paper.

1. The history of landed property in India begins with the Indus civilization of the third millennium B.C. But from limitations of the archaeological evidence, and from the fact that the small amount of epigraphic evidence is yet to be deciphered, it is difficult to say anything with confidence about the agrarian aspects of this civilization. It appears that the cultivation by the Indus people was confined to the arid Indus basin, because not knowing the use of iron, or the device of shaft-hole for their axe, they could not have cleared the dense forests of the Gangetic plain. Their crops probably grew on lands irrigated by the seasonal inundations of the rivers of the Indus system; and they apparently built dams—the *vṛtra* of the *Ṛgveda*—over the natural flood-channels thrown off by the rivers, and over seasonal streams. There is no firm evidence that they knew the use of the plough; perhaps they used only a toothed harrow to raise their principal crops, viz. wheat, barley and cotton.[1]

We must then conceive of the rural Indus population as a largely settled one, clustering along rivers and flood-channels. The rigid uniformity displayed by the two cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, so widely apart in space, and the mobilization

1. The best description of Indus agriculture is given by D. D. Kosambi, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (Bombay, 1956), pp. 62-68, 70. For a view in favour of plough being known to the Indus people, see D. H. Gordon, *The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture* (Bombay, 1958), p. 71, cited in *Enquiry*, iv, 12.

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of labour required for building and repairing dams suggest a considerable degree of autocratic control.[2] It has been argued that this control was reinforced by an elaborate unchanging "magic" ritual.[3] But it is not clear whether the ruling class consisted of "priest-kings" or the merchants (the *paṇis* of the *Ṛgveda*) or a combination of both. At the same time it is possible that the cultivating communities were of practically servile status—the *dasyus* or *dāsas* of the *Ṛgveda*: the presence of slave labour in towns has indeed been deduced from archaeological remains.[4]

2. According to the chronology now widely accepted, the Aryans are regarded as the immediate successors and possibly the wreckers of the Indus civilization: their immigration is supposed to have begun around 1750 B.C., and their first sacred book, the *Ṛgveda*, composed *c.* 1500-1400 B.C. in the region between the Kabul river and the Ganga.

Philological research in the early Indo-European languages and detailed textual studies of the *Ṛgveda* allow us to have a glimpse of the productive system and social structure of the early Aryans. The Aryans had obtained great mobility by domesticating the horse. They were pastoralists; and cows and cattle were in their eyes the main form of wealth. They combined pastoralism with agriculture and knew the use of the plough. Yet barley and some other cereals were the only crops they grew in their early phase.[5] They did not have any towns and took pride in their god Indra's destroying those which others had built.[6]

In such conditions the Aryans appear to have had in the initial stages a simple social structure. They were divided among tribes (*jana*), and lived in villages (*grāma*). The *Ṛgveda* refers to three distinct classes: the kṣatriyas or rājanyas (warriors,

2. Cf. S. Piggot, *Pre-historic India* (London, 1950), pp. 153-55.
3. See esp. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 59-60.
4. Cf. D. R. Chanana, *Slavery in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1960), p. 17.
5. For agriculture in the *Ṛgvedic* period, see N. Bandyopadhyaya. *Economic Life and Progress in Ancient India*, i (Calcutta, 1945), 125-35.
6. For a collection of relevant references, see S. K. Das, *Economic History of Ancient India*, i (Calcutta, 1937), 26-27.

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rulers), the brāhmaṇas (priests) and the *viś* (masses).[7] The wealth of the first two classes is not counted (in references to gains from wars and gifts) in lands, but in cows, horses, and *dāsa*-slaves.[8] The only payment to chiefs known was *bali*, an offering rather than tax.[9] There does not seem to have existed any overlordship of the land, vesting in either the tribal chief, the village chief (*grāmaṇī*), or anyone else.

Some references have been collected from the *Ṛgveda* to support the view that private land-ownership in the homestead and arable land had then existed, and that there was therefore no communal ownership.[10] But the most these passages suggest is that land was divided among fields cultivated by individual peasants who were regarded the holders of the fields (*kṣetra-pati*, etc.). Pasture lands were apparently undivided and were open to the cattle of the whole village. Whether the right to the field was permanent or hereditary or subject to change by communal allotment cannot be established. Indeed, if cultivation was not settled but migratory, as would be more likely at a time when land was abundant, and with Aryans living so often as semi-nomadic pastoralists, the conception of permanent occupation, let alone ownership, of particular fields could not have possibly developed. There is the further possibility that despite the lack of evidence in the *Ṛgveda* to support it, some Aryan tribes did in fact cultivate the land in common, as did some tribes in Panjab, the cradle of the *Ṛgveda*, during the time of Alexander.[11]

The "equalitarian" structure of the agrarian society of the Aryans[12] must surely have been affected in course of time by their struggles with indigenous enemies. The *dāsas* were not all

7. Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 102-05; R. S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India* (Delhi, 1958), p. 18.

8. Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 206-7; Chanana, op. cit., p. 21; Das, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

9. Cf. U. N. Ghoshal, *Contributions to the History of the Hindu Revenue System* (Calcutta, 1929), pp. 3-5.

10. Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 111-15, following Baden-Powell and Macdonell and Keith.

11. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

12. Cf. Sharma, *Śūdras*, p. 26.

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slaughtered; some were enslaved, so that slaves, male (*dāsa*) and female (*dāsī*), appear in the *Ṛgveda* as desirable articles to be obtained in gifts.[13] There is also evidence, which Kosambi so ably presents,[14] of the absorption of *dāsas* in the Aryan fold. Since these people were described in the *Ṛgveda* itself as city-dwellers, there is great likelihood of their having brought with them elements of a more developed class-structure. It is probable that out of the servile and subject population so brought under them, augmented also by such Aryans as were subjugated or enslaved in internecine warfare,[15] arose the śūdra class. The śūdras were recognized in the last portion of the *Ṛgveda*, in its only reference to them, as the fourth varṇa (caste-class), placed beneath the vaiśya, the old *viś*. Although there is no evidence as to the actual status of the śūdras in the early Vedic period, it is reasonable to suppose that they were not peasants, but servile field-labourers for the tribes or for their individual masters, or were possible "helots", as they are thought to have been in the later Vedic phase.[16]

3. The later Vedic period, when the other three Vedas, particularly the *Atharvaveda* and the early *Brāhmaṇas* were composed, represents a phase of great expansion of the Aryans. Archaeological evidence testifies to the presence of iron in the Upper Ganga basin some time before 1000 B.C., or at any rate around 800 B.C.[17] With iron the Aryans could penetrate the

13. Sharma, *Śūdras*, p. 30ff.

14. Kosambi, op. cit., p . 92ff.

15. Sharma, *Śūdras*, p . 30ff., urges the view that the śūdras arose out of an Aryan tribe of this name.

16. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 94-95; Sharma, *Śūdras*, pp. 46-48. Sharma, however, denies that there was a "considerable Śūdra or slave population" in the Rgvedic period and argues that their "disabilities" arose only later (p. 41).

17. Kosambi fixes the date 800-700 B.C. on the basis of literary evidence (*JESHO*, vi, no. 3, 314). This date may be modified by archaeologists' finds. Traces of iron have been found at the level of Painted Grey Ware: middle phase, assigned by carbon-dating to *c.* 1025 B.C. at Atranjikhera, and at a level dated eighth century B.C. at Noh. (I owe this information to my colleague, Mr R. C. Gaur, who has supervised the excavations at Atranjikhera.)

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dense forests of the Ganga plains.[18] They used fire to clear the forests,[19] and had heavy ploughs drawn sometimes by six or eight or even 12 yokes of oxen,[20] and, therefore, still needed very large supply of cattle. It is probable that the settlements were not permanently fixed. The fertility of the soil would have been exhausted after some years, and a new clearing would have to be made.[21] Yet the yield must have been much greater than in the arid tracts of the west, and we know that the Aryans now had a greater variety of crops, including rice and sugar-cane.[22] The surplus so gained made possible the beginnings of urban life. Names of towns, still too few, begin to appear in the literature of the period.[23]

These new developments were bound to affect the old simpler forms of landed property. Fields are for the first time counted as an index of wealth,[24] showing that large landed possessions became possible. The heavy plough may well have tended to put control over cultivation in the hands of those who possessed numerous cattle as well as slave-labourers. Keith has indeed suggested that "for the peasant working on his own fields was being substituted the land-owner cultivating his estate by means of slaves".[25] References to slaves being given away with ploughs, and similarly to śūdras with lands, occur in the *Śrautasūtras*.[26] In a famous passage in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* the śūdra is described as a "servant of another" bound to render labour whenever called upon to do so, and to be beaten at pleasure.[27] Perhaps the ranks of slaves and śūdras were augmented by the autochthonous tribes—the *vrātyas*—of the Ganga basin, who

18. Cf. Chanana, op. cit., pp. 23-25; Kosambi, in *JESHO*, vi, no. 3, 314.
19. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 116-17.
20. Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 133-34; Das, op. cit., pp. 90-91.
21. This has happened in recent times wherever forest land has been abundant; and the practice has been followed by immigrant peasants who were previously settled cultivators.
22. Bandyopadhyaya, op. cit., pp. 131-32; Das, op. cit., pp. 93-94.
23. Das, op. cit., pp. 81-82.
24. Chanana, op. cit., p. 21; Das, op. cit., p. 82.
25. *The Cambridge History of India*, i (Delhi reprint, 1955), 114-15.
26. Sharma, op. cit., p. 46.
27. Ibid. pp. 59-60.

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were being continuously subjugated or absorbed in the Aryan fold.[28]

The peasants, the *viś* or vaiśyas, too became increasingly subject to the exactions and oppressions of a superior class. Thus the vaiśya came to be described as "tributary (paying *bali*) to another, eaten by another and oppressed at will".[29] A kind of embryonic village (*grāma*) overlord appears, who has "creatures led by the noses", has authority over his relatives and keeps "the folk dependent upon him".[30]

Another superior non-peasant right on the land developed in the form of villages and fields held by the priests, the brāhmaṇas, who were essentially independent of tribal affiliations.[31]

Behind this increasing class-differentiation can be traced the growth in the power and pretensions of the ruler or chief (*rājan, kṣatriya*). In the beginning his claim seems to have been over a 16th of the produce of the land; and he also aspired to an undefined share "in villages, in horses, in kine". Afterwards he levied a tax, *bali*, of an undefined nature, from the vaiśyas, or peasants.[32] Furthermore, he began to grant authority over lands and villages to his lesser chiefs (*kṣatriyas*).[33] Finally, we see him giving away lands and villages to brāhmaṇas.[34] Such grants were apparently first made with the consent of the *viś*, or the peasant community;[35] but in course of time the grants tended to become arbitrary acts of the king, and as such appear to have aroused some protest.[36]

There were, however, also tribes, which were within the Aryan fold, but among which neither the brāhmanical caste-class differentiation nor the monarchy had developed. These

28. Cf. Kosambi, op. cit., p . 114ff.
29. Sharma, *Śūdras*, p. 59; Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, p. 7.
30. U. N. Ghoshal, *The Agrarian System in Ancient India* (Calcutta, 1930), p. 4.
31. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 100-1, 125-26, 131.
32. Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, pp. 6-8.
33. Das, op. cit., p. 85.
34. Ibid. pp. 88-89; Kosambi, op. cit., p. 125.
35. Das, op. cit., p. 86.
36. Ghoshal, *Agrarian System*, p. 5; Sharma, *Śūdras*, p. 46.

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tribes assumed the form of oligarchies sustained by the labour of śūdra-helots.[37] It is of course not very material for our present purpose whether these oligarchies are to be regarded as survivals of the original Aryans or, as Kosambi urges, of the semi-Aryanized "autocthonous" tribes of the Ganga basin, whose cousins ("Nāgas", "caṇḍālas") must have still survived with their nomadic food-gathering in the forests.[38]

4. The three hundred and 50 years from *c.* 550 to 200 B.C. represent a very interesting period of change in Indian history. The rise of Buddhism spearheaded an ideological revolt against brāhmaṇical dominance. Large kingdoms appeared and expanded, culminating in the vast Mauryan empire (322-184 B.C.) which embraced practically the whole of India and most of Afghanistan. Accompanying and possibly underlying these developments was a considerable advance in economic life, marked by the rise of towns, growth of commerce, and the use of ("punch-marked") coins.

The source-material for the period is large and varied: the early canonical literature of the Buddhists and the *Jātakas*, the *Arthaśāstra* (treatise on polity, statecraft and administration) of Kauṭilya and early brāhmaṇical legal literature; the Greek accounts, largely derived from Megasthenes; and the inscriptions of Aśoka (273-36 B.C.), with which Indian epigraphic evidence begins. The dating of the Indian sources (except Aśoka's inscriptions) and the degree of veracity of the Greek accounts pose very difficult problems for the historian. But it is now generally agreed that all of the Indian sources contain elements genuinely coming from this period, though as they stand they also contain later interpolations. With some reservations, the Greek accounts too are accepted as largely authentic.

On the basis of a critical examination of this material, carried out by many scholars, a distinct picture of the agrarian relations of the period emerges.

37. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 141; Chanana, op. cit., pp. 43-44; Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India, 600 B.C.-200 A.D.* (Calcutta, 1961), pp. 48-49.

38. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 121-29, 140-41, 143-44.

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There appear to have continued from the earlier times peasant communities, in which productive effort of certain kinds was undertaken by the peasants in common.[39] So deeply entrenched seems to have been the institution of the village-community that artisans, like smiths and carpenters, and others also tended to settle in villages comprising exclusively people of their own profession or caste.[40] Such manufacturers' villages are a peculiarity of this period and may perhaps be explained by the fact that in this earlier phase of commercial evolution it was not possible for artisans to feed themselves without carrying on some cultivation themselves.

The growth in commerce and introduction of money probably made urban land (and, possibly, orchards) into a marketable commodity, but it is doubtful if arable land became as freely subject to sale.[41] The *Arthaśāstra* in any case allows sale of land to a limited extent only, confining the purchasers to kinsmen and neighbours.[42] This is understandable, since land must still have been abundant, and not usually worth purchasing, while individual peasant-holding could not have been conceived of outside the limits of the village community.

Alongside the peasant communities, men possessing wealth, particularly in the form of cattle or slaves, controlled large stretches of land. The *Jātakas* introduce us to veritable "cattle-magnates" owning enormous herds (e.g., 30,000 heads), with numerous slaves and hirelings (1,250 under one magnate are reported).[43] But still more frequently we meet "big Brāhmaṇa landowners (who) have their fields cultivated by their slaves or day-labourers".[44] The brāhmaṇa occupation of the land must have been substantially encouraged by the royal assignments of revenue-free lands (*brahmadeya*) to them.[45] Fick is

39. Das, op. cit., pp. 188-89; Bose, op. cit., p. 48.

40. R. Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, English tr. (Calcutta, 1920), pp. 280-85.

41. Cf. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 145.

42. Cf. Bose, op. cit., pp. 54, 83-85.

43. Ibid. p. 93.

44. Fick, op. cit., pp 243-44; Bose, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

45. Fick, op. cit., p. 210. Fields as large as 1,000 *kariṣas* in area are mentioned. *Kariṣa* has been held to be about eight acres (Bose, op. cit., p.

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so much impressed with the constant *Jātaka* references to brāhmaṇas as landowners (including small and rather impecunious brāhmaṇa cultivators as well) that he declares it "probable" that the land was then "mostly in the possession of brāhmaṇas".[46] But we can be certain that the brāhmaṇas alone did not by any means constitute the entire class of non-peasant landholders. There are references in the *Jātakas* themselves to *seṭṭhis* (merchants, or merchant-officers) possessing villages and fields.[47] Moreover, kṣatriya tribal oligarchies continued to have their lands cultivated by slaves, servants or helots.[48] Kauṭilya designates these tribes *śreṇīs* or kṣatriya guilds, and considers the question whether new land should be settled by them, and not ordinary peasants, thus implying an antithesis between their mode of cultivation and peasant-farming.[49]

It is probable that ordinary peasants had everywhere fallen under some kind of subjection to local superior classes, whose members were designated *gahapatis* and *kuṭumbikas* (who included *seṭṭhis*). They controlled villages, while they also possessed lands in their own right.[50] They engaged in usury too, which must have helped to further their control over the peasants (through their obtaining a share in the crop).[51]

By the time of the Mauryas such a superior class had come to be recognized (according to Kosambi's interpretation of Kauṭilya) under the name *paura-jānapada*, the town and country "citizenry". Kauṭilya recommended that higher administrative officers of the government should be recruited from this class; and of its two components, urban and rural, he thought the rural or the *janapadas* to be politically the more important. The *janapadas* paid the king's tax of "one-sixth" of the produce (*ṣaḍbhāga*) along

64*n*). But one hesitates to accept such a definite statement when the imponderable factors are so many.

46. Fick, op. cit., p. 241.
47. Chanana, op. cit., p. 42.
48. Ibid. pp. 43-44.
49. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 203-04, 221.
50. Fick, op. cit., pp. 251-66.
51. For *Jātaka* references to rural usury, Fick, op. cit., p. 257; Bose, op. cit., p. 64. Cf. also Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 139-40.

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with some other taxes under the heading of *rāṣṭra* (district). On the other hand they must have extracted a much larger part of the surplus from the peasants, sometimes possibly employing *ardha-sītikas* or sharecroppers from whom they took half the crop.[52]

Superior private right over the land was accompanied by a new and important form of landed property, the king's domain. Kauṭilya attaches great significance, from the point of view of the king's revenues, to the *sītā* or the crops brought in from the king's own lands.[53] Moreover, only the fact that the royal domains were very large could adequately explain the Greek report that in India all land belonged to the king, who took either ¾ths or ¼th of the crop.[54] If we follow Kauṭilya's detailed description of the management of the *sītā*-lands, it would appear that these initially arose out of waste land appropriated by the king to establish agricultural settlements. The king's lands were divided into two parts: one, cultivated by the labour of slaves, wage-earners and convicts under the direction of royal officials; the other leased to sharecroppers (*ardha-sītikas*) for half the crop, and also to others —by one interpretation, to labourers who contributed nothing but labour and so surrendered ¾ths of the crop to the king; and by another, to men of "valour", who were encouraged to settle by being allowed to pay only a quarter of the crop[55] (there were also revenue-free grants made to brāhmaṇas out of waste lands, ostensibly as part of the policy to extend cultivation).[56] The taxes on the leased royal lands did not exhaust royal demand. There were heavy additional charges for irrigation.[57] And there were labour services (*viṣṭi*) taken from certain groups of subjects, composed possibly of such śūdra labourers as did not have any land under their own occupation and so could not be asked to pay taxes.[58]

52. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 212-16.
53. Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, pp. 28-29.
54. Ibid. pp. 167-71; Kosambi, op. cit., p. 219.
55. Ghoshal, op. cit., pp. 29-31, 34; Kosambi, op. cit., p. 215.
56. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions of Ancient India*, (Delhi, 1959), p. 220.
57. Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, pp. 32-34.
58. Sharma, *Śūdras*, pp. 151-52.

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It is significant that Kauṭilya should stress that the settlements in royal lands ought to consist overwhelmingly of śūdra peasants (*śūdra-karṣaka*) and low-class elements, whom he regards more amenable to exploitation.[59] It is obvious that settlements were often the result of large-scale deportations of whole communities;[60] and by this means what were previously labouring or non-agricultural populations were transformed into semi-servile peasants.[61] These peasants once settled in the royal lands could not move freely; their right to the land was for life only; and they could lose their right, if they failed to cultivate the land properly.[62]

5. In recent researches it has been stressed that the Mauryan empire accelerated two processes which, when they were substantially completed in the following period, *c.* 200 B.C.-A.D. 650, resulted in the creation of the traditional Indian village, closed and self-sufficient, and based on individual peasant-farming.

Kosambi has shown how once the population of craftsmen increased and certain skills, like iron-smelting, became widely known, under the impetus of the growth of commerce and the centralized administration of the Mauryas, individual artisans could begin moving to the villages.[63] The results of this ruralization of crafts may be seen from evidence relating to the first five or six centuries after Christ. For example, we hear no more of the separate carpenters' settlement of the previous epoch; and on the other hand sixth-century epigraphs introduce us to the village carpenter with his own separate plot within the peasant village.[64] When each village had its own carpenter, smith and potter, it would not only make the village self-sufficient, but it also could, to borrow a phrase from Gordon Childe, "democratise agriculture", each cultivator having access, without need of intermediary, to his essential productive needs.

59. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 218-19, 221; Sharma, *Sudras*, pp. 146-49.
60. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 196; R. Thapar in *Readings in Indian Economic History*, ed. B. N. Ganguli (Bombay, 1964), pp. 25-26.
61. Sharma, *Śūdras*, pp. 146-47.
62. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 218; Sharma, *Śūdras*, pp. 147-48.
63. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 222.
64. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 312.

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Secondly, the settlement of śūdras as cultivators, which Kauṭilya regards as a deliberate measure of policy to be enforced by the king, led in this period to the transformation of a substantial part of the śūdra population into peasants. R. S. Sharma has shown by a detailed examination of the evidence how the older conventional assumption (in the *Manusmṛti*, *c.* 200 B.C.-A.D. 200) that the śūdras were simply servants of the higher castes and could not be tax-payers (and so not peasants)[65] is modified in the legal literature of the subsequent centuries until by the seventh century peasants are generally assumed to be śūdras.[66]

This consolidation of peasant-cultivation is reflected in the absence of any reference after the Mauryan period to large "farms", whether of private owners or of the king, worked by slaves and hired labour.[67] Along with the large farms, agrarian slavery, i.e., the employment of slaves in agriculture, also seems to have largely disappeared, the last traced reference to village slaves coming from the *Milindapañho* (*c.* 100 B.C.).[68]

At the same time a class of rural labourers continued to exist. The existence of such a class would have been needed by conditions of peasant-farming[69] and it is possible that its ranks were continually reinforced, as cultivation extended, by the conversion of aboriginal and pastoral tribes[70] into menial castes under

65. Sharma, *Śūdras*, p. 178.

66. Ibid. pp. 232-34.

67. Ibid. p. 231; also cf. Sharma in *Jour. Bihar Res. Soc.*, lxiv, nos. 3-4 (1958), 8. The negative evidence would appear to suffice. Epigraphic specifications of areas of grants by private donors in north Bengal during the fifth and sixth centuries can hardly be regarded as relevant since we do not know what was the actual mode of cultivation (if any) carried on in these lands before and after the transfer. This is besides the fact that it is very difficult to be sure about the actual value of the measures of area used. See S. K. Maity, *Economic Life in Northern India in the Gupta Period* (Calcutta, 1957), pp. 200-01 (for tabulated information from the inscriptions) and pp. 35-41 (for measures of area).

68. Sharma, *Śūdras*, pp. 227-28, 230-31. Cf. Maity, op. cit., p. 145. For the *Milindapañho* reference, see Sharma, op. cit., p. 178.

69. Cf. Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India* (Bombay, 1963), pp. 121-22.

70. For Yuan Chwang's description (*c.* A.D. 640) of a large primitive pastoral community in Sind, see Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 292-93.

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subjection to communities of caste-peasants. In any case several references to agricultural labourers have been collected from the sources of the period. Patañjali (second century B.C.) speaks of a landowner supervising ploughing done by five hired labourers, and the *Manusmṛti* refers to servants of peasants.[71] Subsequent legal literature even lays down the rates of wages for agricultural labourers (*bhṛtyas*), ranging from 1/10th of the crop to 1/5th plus food and clothing, or 1/3rd of the crop only.[72]

Theoretically speaking, since there were still large tracts of forest and waste, both in northern India and in the Deccan and southern India (where plough cultivation began on a large scale probably at the beginning of this period),[73] it could not have been possible to establish a monopoly of the ownership of land in the hands of a small non-peasant class. The *Milindapañho* declares that "when a man clears away the jungle and sets free the land, people say 'that is his land' ".[74] This may be read with the oft-quoted dictum of the *Manusmṛti* that land belongs to him who first removed the weed, and the deer to him who first wounded it. Such statements are held to show that land could be directly occupied by individual peasants at the expense of the jungle, without the intermediation of the king or a superior class. It has been argued, however, that it is inconceivable for forest-clearing to have been attempted by individual peasants except as members of larger groups or communities.[75]

Evidence like this leads Kosambi to postulate implicitly a stage around the beginning of the Christian era, when closed peasant-village economy prevailed with practically no superior, land-owning class or overlords, and with only limited authority and exactions claimed by the king. This simple structure of society was in course of time disturbed by the king's alienation of his rights to subordinate chiefs who came to have direct relations with the peasantry, a process which Kosambi terms "Feudalism

71. Sharma, *Śūdras*, p. 178.
72. Ibid. pp. 224-25; Maity, op. cit., pp. 74-75, 149-50.
73. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 228-29, 278-80.
74. Bose, op. cit., p. 40.
75. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 249; Maity, op. cit., p. 12, disputes the significance of Manu's dictum without much good reason.

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from above". He seems to think that it had reached an advanced stage of development during the period of the Guptas (fourth-fifth centuries) and of Harṣa (seventh century). At a still later stage "a class of land-owners" was to develop from within the village, this later development being termed "Feudalism from below".[76]

Interesting as this theory is, there has been no adequate discussion of it so far. The appropriateness of the terms "Feudalism from above" and "below" has been questioned from a Marxist point of view.[77] But on the question whether a pre-"feudal" society of the type postulated by Kosambi actually ever existed, admittedly with exceptions and regional variations, which Kosambi himself would be the first to admit, little light has been shed by other scholars.

Sharma appears to reject—for he does not explicitly take issue with Kosambi on this point—the supposition that a land-owning class above the peasantry did not come into existence until the later centuries of the first millennium. He cites Yājñavalkya (*c.* fifth century A.D.) for the statement that the land is to be assigned to the cultivator (*karṣaka*) by the landowner (*kṣetra-svāmi*), the king (*mahīpati*) being only entitled to the fruits of improvements made in the land in the absence of the owner (*svāmī*). He points out that Bṛhaspati too provides for a *svāmī* or owner above the actual tiller. It thus appears to him that the *svāmīs* leased their lands to "temporary cultivators".[78]

Epigraphic evidence too attests to the existence of such a class. Kosambi himself notices (as "unique") the purchase of a field by the Śaka prince Usavadata (*c.* A.D. 120) near Nasik from a brāhmaṇa in order to provide food for monks.[79] The presence of a non-peasant private right to the produce of the land is here unmistakable. This may be set alongside the evidence of two inscriptions of the third and fourth centuries A.D.

76. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 275-76.
77. Irfan Habib in *Seminar* 39: *Past and Present*, New Delhi.
78. Sharma in *Jour. Bihar Res. Soc.*, xliv, nos. 3-4, 9; also *Political Ideas and Institutions*, pp. 222-23.
79. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 257.

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which indicates "the practice of letting out land to cultivators who received half the produce".[80] We are thus offered evidence for both non-peasant land-owners and their counterpart, share-croppers.

It is not even unlikely that some of the peasants were semi-serfs and, having been denied the freedom of movement, could not occupy virgin soil even if available. Again, Kosambi himself, while noting that Fahien, *c.* A.D. 400, refers to the cultivators having the free choice of staying on or leaving the land, points out that the same traveller describes Buddhist abbeys as holding land "along with the resident population and cattle", which would suggest something approaching serfdom.[81]

The king, as we have seen, appears in Kauṭilya as proprietor of a part of the land under his sovereignty. This division of the land between the *sītā*-lands or king's domains (where the king claimed the bulk of the surplus either by organizing their cultivation or by sharing the crop with the cultivators) and the general lands (where he only took his conventional tax of one-sixth and other dues) seems to have disappeared during this period. The last possible survival of the *sītā*-land may be seen in a Nasik inscription (*c.* A.D. 130) which refers to a "royal field" (*rājakamkheta*) in a village.[82] The supposed sales of "state lands" recorded in inscriptions of the fifth and sixth centuries are not really sales of lands, but sales of immunity from royal taxation.[83]

The Chinese travellers Fahien (A.D. 399-414) and Yuan Chwang (A.D. 629-45), it is true, refer, the first, to the "king's lands" and, the other, to the "king's tenants". But since they speak of the tillers of these lands alone as paying him revenue in the form of a share in the crop (which Yuan Chwang puts significantly at the conventional one-sixth), it seems as if they mean by king's land simply the revenue-paying land (as distinct,

80. L. Gopal in *JESHO*, vi, no. 3 (1933), 306.
81. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 278-79. Cf. L. Gopal in *JESHO*, iv, no. 2, 306-07.
82. Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, p. 187. Cf. Bose, op. cit., p. 45.
83. Kosambi, op. cit., p. 297. For the contrary assumption, see Maity, op. cit., pp. 19, 200-01.

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perhaps, from the dominions of the tributary rulers).[84] Their statements would thus in fact confirm the disappearance of the king's domain, separate from the ordinary revenue paying land.

A significant feature of the period, initially due, as suggested by Kosambi, to the rise of the self-sufficient village, was the beginning of allotment of the king's own revenues from particular areas to his officials and vassals in lieu of salary. Kautilya had prescribed salaries in cash; but the *Manusmṛti* lays down a scheme whereby officials posted over an area were to be assigned the revenues of a part of their charge (e.g., revenue of one village to the officer placed over a hundred).[85] Epigraphic evidence illustrating this practice is lacking, owing possibly to the perishable materials used for record of such allotment.[86] But from the account of Yuan Chwang it seems that it was well established by the seventh century, for he declares that all officers, high and low, were remunerated by allotments of revenues of lands.[87]

We have no direct information about the conditions on which these allotments of revenue were held. But since there is some evidence that the *bhogikas* or administrative officers were, already in the Gupta period, tending to become hereditary and to be set permanently over particular localities,[88] the revenue-allotments also must have become fixed and usually not subject to resumption. It is likely, therefore, that the officers were able to extend their rights in the land to beyond the conventional claims of the king. For example, the village headman (*grāmādhipati āyuktaka*) is represented in the *Kāmasūtra* (*c.* fourth-fifth centuries A.D.) as exacting unpaid labour from peasant women, compelling them, among other things, to fill his granaries and work on his fields.[89] The official thus appears as having

84. Cf. Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, pp. 191-92, 224-27.

85. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 241-42.

86. Cf. Sharma in *JESHO*, iv, no. 1 (1961), 70-71.

87. Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, pp. 228-29; Sharma, *Political Ideas and nstitutions*, p. 207.

88. Sharma, *Political Ideas and Institutions*, p . 207ff.

89. Ibid. pp. 211, 225; L. Gopal in *JESHO*, vi, no. 3 (1963), 305.

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land of his own and enjoying semi-feudal rights over the peasantry.

Epigraphic evidence for royal grants to Buddhist monks and monasteries and to brāhmaṇas and, later brāhmanical temples, begins with the earlier part of the second century A.D. The texts of the grants preserved on stone and, oftener, on copper plates, contain lists of the rights transferred and exemptions and immunities promised. It is generally agreed that what was usually granted was the king's own fiscal and semi-fiscal claims, with some administrative or semi-judicial privileges or immunities.[90] The land of the grants is often described as waste land. It has, therefore, been suggested that the brāhmaṇas obtaining such grants helped to extend cultivation.[91] But it is also possible that the references to waste land were often a mere matter of form, and lands already cultivated were also granted.[92] However, even if the priestly brāhmaṇas were not always pioneer cultivators themselves, it is probable that on lands previously waste, or, by Ghoshal's interpretation of a term, under "temporary tenants",[93] they would tend to become practically landowners. The phrase often used in the grants that they were entitled "to cultivate the land or get it cultivated", in fact, shows that they could either cultivate the land themselves or lease it to peasants on terms.[94] Early in the eighth century I-tsing tells us of Buddhist monasteries providing bulls and fields to cultivators (who should, therefore, be regarded as their tenants and not taxpayers) and taking one-sixth of the crop (which was the conventional royal share).[95] It appears inherently probable that the actual share of the crop in such cases was much larger than the stated conventional one.

6. There is a widespread tendency to designate the period

90. Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, p . 186ff, contains a detailed analysis of the nature of the grants. Cf. Kosambi, op. cit., p . 291ff.

91. Kosambi, op. cit., p 291ff.

92. Sharma, *Political Ideas and Institutions*, pp. 216-20.

93. For the interpretation of *uparikara* as "impost levied on temporary tenants", see Ghoshal, *Revenue System*, pp. 210-13. But see Maity, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

94. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 300-01.

95. Sharma, *Political Ideas and Institutions*, p. 222.

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from the seventh to the twelfth centuries as "feudal". Some historians, when they do so, appear to have in mind little more than the decay in monarchical power and the appearance of "feudatories" of various grades which marked the polity of the period.[96] But suggestions have been made that in the structure of agrarian relationships too certain elements may be traced which, for want of a better term, can be called "feudal".

There is little evidence to suggest that the general prevalence of peasant-cultivation, whose consolidation has been postulated for the previous period, was in any important respect modified. The existence of a form of serfdom, inferred from references to transfer of individual peasants and labourers as part of grants of lands, is attested by epigraphic records from Marwar, Saurashtra, Orissa and Bengal.[97] Though the epigraphic evidence is confined to a few regions only, Sharma quotes a Chinese account of A.D. 732 to show that the practice of donating villages together with the villagers to monasteries and temples was universal in India; and he takes it to indicate a general emergence of serfdom.[98] Passages from literature suggesting that the peasants were able to migrate in order to escape from oppression[99] are not decisive, and may only mean that on occasions the restraints on peasants could not be enforced.

The introduction of the Persian wheel (*araghaṭa*)[100] besides helping to extend cultivation in the Indus basin and western Rajasthan, where the water-table is low, could also have had some effect on agrarian relations. An ingenious wooden machine, which was within the reach of the common peasant by the 16th century,[101] it was in the earlier phase apparently a

96. Cf., for example, B. P. Mazumdar, *Socio-Economic History of Northern India (1030-1194 A.D.)* (Calcutta, 1961), pp. 1-41.

97. Cf. L. Gopal in *JESHO*, vi, no. 3 (1963), 297ff; R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism, c. 300-1200*, pp. 231-32.

98. R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism*, pp. 57-60.

99. L. Gopal, op. cit., p. 296.

100. L. Gopal gives reference to it from the literature and epigraphs of this period, in *University of Allahabad Studies (Ancient History Section)*, 1963-64, pp. 9-10. Cf. also Kosambi, op. cit., p. liv.

101. As shown by Babur's account of its use, *Bāburnāma*, tr. S. Beveridge, ii, 486.

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possession of only the rich.[102] Inscriptions refer to a share in the barley crop claimed from peasants by potentates in Marwar on account of the Persian wheel wells, presumably owned by them.[103] There is also the possibility, inferred from a passage in a literary work, that the owner of a Persian wheel could be a "landlord" employing "cultivators, workers and servants".[104]

The principal characteristics of the agrarian system of the period, however, concern the mode of distribution of the surplus. The large amount of epigraphic evidence and some literary sources as well as Arabic and Persian accounts relating to the period enable us to have a more intimate view of this aspect than is possible for earlier times.

In essence, what happened during these five centuries may be called the ruralization of the ruling class. This appears to be linked up closely with the decline in urban life, which has been postulated for all the centuries since the Mauryas,[105] and with a marked decline in commerce, which can be the only reason for the extreme paucity of coins surviving from this period.[106] It is natural to expect in such conditions that the officials and aristocracies in the empires or kingdoms would be dispersed in the country and "live off the land".

The tendency can be closely traced in the polity of the period. First, there is considerable evidence of the wide prevalence of the practice, already present in the preceding period, of the assignment of revenues of particular territories to officers of the king.[107] It would appear that officers now held the revenues of the entire area placed in their administrative charge,[108] which perhaps marked a substantial change from the previous practice. This could explain a phenomenon whose

102. L. Gopal, *University of Allahabad Studies*, p. 10.
103. Ibid. pp. 83, 93; also see *JESHO*, iv, no. 1 (1961), 89.
104. Cf. L. Gopal in *University of Allahabad Studies*, p. 10.
105. Kosambi, op. cit., pp. 282-83.
106. L. Gopal, op. cit., pp. 75-76.
107. The epigraphic evidence for this is set out by R. S. Sharma in *JESHO*, iv, no. 1 (1961), 70-105, and L. Gopal, *University of Allahabad Studies*, 1963-64, pp. 75-103.
108. Cf. L. Gopal, op. cit., p. 101. R. S. Sharma, who appears to take the contrary view (*JESHO*, iv, no. 1, 90-91), is probably guided by his

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existence is otherwise established, namely, the disappearance of distinction between royal officials and "feudatories", hereditary feudatories being appointed to royal offices, and officials being granted the titles and, presumably, the privileges of feudatories.[109]

This meant really a division of the entire territories of each kingdom, leading inevitably to sub-division. In its extreme form the process is seen in the so-called "clan-monarchies" or the proto-Rajput kingdoms, especially under the Gurjara-Pratihāras, eighth-tenth centuries, and the dynasties succeeding them in the various regions once ruled over by them. Here the territory was parcelled out by the ruler after retaining his own share (*svabhujyamāna svabhoga*) among his kinsmen and clan-chiefs.[110] Each of the latter then set about dividing his territory among his own clansmen, while retaining "his own share" (*svabhogāvāptaḥ*), until by this process of "sub-infeudation" every village was assigned to a particular man in return for supply of troopers when needed by the assignor.[111]

It is in the same period and the same regions that new territorial units, comprising groups of villages, specified by numbers that were all multiples of 6, viz. 12, 42, and 84, were established. These units are mentioned in the records of the Pratihāras, and the succeeding dynasties of Cāhamānas, Gāhaḍvālas, Paramāras and Cālukyas; they were unheard of before, but many of the units of 84 (*chaurāsīs*) survive to the present day.[112] Even now they are particularly associated with the Rajput castes.[113] U. N. Ghoshal offers the only plausible explanation for their emergence, namely, that they were created for convenience of distribution of territories among the chiefs

identification of the land-grants made to officers with their revenue-assignments (for which see below).

109. Cf. R. S. Sharma in *JIH*, xli, no. 1 (1963), 281-83; L. Gopal, op. cit. pp. 83-86.

110. Cf. U. N. Ghoshal, *Hindu Revenue System*, p. 236; Sharma in *JESHO*, iv, no. 1, 87ff, 96-98; L. Gopal, op. cit., pp. 86-95.

111. Sharma in *JESHO*, iv, no. 1, 96-98. Cf. Mazumdar, op. cit., p. 28.

112. See Sir Henry Elliot's long note on *Chaurāsī* in his *Memoirs on... the North-Western Provinces of India*, ed. Beames (London), ii, 47-78.

113. Cf. Ibid. p. 77.

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in the "clan monarchies".[114] Their sturdy survival down the centuries indicates the sweeping and, indeed, lasting nature of the territorial distribution that took place among the dominant clans at that time.

The most common titles of the new potentates are *sāmanta,*[115] *rāṇaka, rauta, ṭhakkura,* and *rājaputra.* It is not always easy to establish the place of the different titles in the hierarchy. *Rājaputra,* for example, is used for a prince under the Cāhamānas,[116] but for the lowest ranking "fief"-holder under the Cālukayas.[117] It also appears that neither this nor its abbreviated form *rauta,* nor *ṭhakkura,* necessarily denoted a particular caste.[118] But it is possible that a new caste, ancestor of the later "martial" caste of Rajputs, was already emerging. Sharma has shown how once a particular tribe, the Gurjaras, for example, had established its domination, a rapid process of differentiation would take place within it, with the ordinary tribesmen-cultivators, the common Gujars, joining the ranks of the ordinary exploited masses. It may be expected that simultaneously with this political and economic depreciation of the mass of the tribesmen, their betters would tend to form a separate, superior caste. It is, therefore, not without reason that the tribes of the "clan-monarchies" have been regarded in tradition as the ancestors of several clans of the Rajputs.

Formally speaking, the rights of members of the new ruling class should not have extended beyond those claimed by the king, from whom their authority nominally derived. It is difficult to establish the exact magnitude of the land-revenue demand

114. Ghoshal, *Revenue System,* pp. 241, 259-60. His suggestion is reinforced by L. Gopal's examination of epigraphic evidence in *University of Allahabad Studies,* pp. 95-99.

115. The change of meaning of *sāmanta* from "king" to "feudal baron" is dated late in the sixth century by Kosambi on the basis of epigraphic evidence (*JESHO,* ii, no. 3, 283-84).

116. L. Gopal, op. cit., p. 93.

117. Sharma, *JESHO,* iv, no. 1, 96-98.

118. Thus a brāhmaṇa is described as grandson of a rauta and great-grandson of a *rāṇaka* (Ibid. 79). For *ṭhakkura* being a title sometimes held by brāhmaṇas and so having not caste but "feudal implications" see Kosambi, op. cit., p. 335.

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set by the rulers. References to the conventional royal "one-sixth" or even "one-tenth" share of the crop have been found in two or three inscriptions.[119] But it is likely that these were mere formal terms like "tithe" and did not represent the actual state of affairs.[120] In any case, inscriptions mention a host of other taxes and imposts on the peasants besides the share in the crop, which would have inflated the burden on them to an unknown extent.

It seems, moreover, that besides their territorial assignments, the potentates were obtaining particular lands under hereditary right. From the ninth century we have epigraphic records of hereditary grants of revenues of land to state officers, and these greatly increase from the eleventh century.[121] These are not "service grants", i.e., grants in lieu of cash pay or in return for service but grants simply patterned on those made so far only to brāhmaṇas and religious institutions.[122] Being hereditary and unconditional, these were different from territorial assignments; and it is possible that the grantee's right tended to become almost fully proprietary. Early in the thirteenth century under the Candellas in eastern Uttar Pradesh we find *a rāṇaka* accepting a village in mortgage, and another *rāṇaka* mortgaging his fields to two other *rāṇakas*.[123] We very probably have here an early indication of how the personal land-holdings of rural chiefs, surviving into the fourteenth century and later times, were created.

The inscriptions of the period bear testimony to the continuous stream of grants by rulers as well as their "feudatories" to brāhamaṇas. From the sixth century we have an increasing number of grants bestowed on brāhmanical temples, many of

119. P. Niyogi, *Contributions to the Economic History of Northern India, from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century A.D.* (Calcutta, 1962), pp. 180-81.

120. Cf. Moreland, *Agrarian System of Moslem India* (Allahabad reprint, n.d.), p. 5.

121. Sharma, *JESHO*, iv, no. 1, 70. Cf. also Kosambi, *JESHO*, ii, no. 3, 293, for a similar case of mortgage from Rewa, A.D. 1212.

122. Cf. L. Gopal, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

123. Sharma, *JESHO*, iv, no. 1, 81.

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which tended to have large bodies of priests and attendants.[124] The extent of the lands under the control of the temples during this period must have been considerable, for it is probable that revenues from them were one of the chief sources of their fabulous wealth.[125]

II

1. The Ghorian conquests of northern India, leading to the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) may be said to mark the true beginning of the medieval period in India. We now have historical works, properly so called; and a connected narrative history becomes for the first time possible. There are, however, other reasons than an improvement in the nature of the historical record that make the thirteenth century an important watershed in Indian history.

To begin with, the new conquerors and rulers, who were of a different faith (Islam) from that of their predecessors, established a regime that was in some profound respects different from the old. The Sultans achieved power that was, in terms of both territorial extent and centralization, unprecedented (except, perhaps, for the Mauryas 1,500 years earlier). Their principal achievements lay in a great systematization of agrarian exploitation and an immense concentration of the resources so obtained. This ensured that the land-revenue (*Kharāj/māl*) demanded on their behalf should comprehend the bulk, if not the whole, of the peasant's surplus produce; and the king's bureaucracy thereby became the principal exploiting class in society.

Immediately after the conquest the conquerors tended to enter into settlements with members of the defeated and subjugated aristocracies—the *rā'is* (=*rājas*), *rānās* (=*rāṇakas*) and *rāwats* (=*rauts*).[126] *Kharāj* was then really no more than tribute fixed on the subjugated rulers, except for some small

124. Sharma, *Political Ideas and Institutions*, pp. 221-22.
125. Cf. P. Niyogi, op. cit., pp. 284-98, for a rather uncritical collection of information relating to the "temple economy" of the period.
126. See, for example, Minhaj Siraj, *Tabaqāt-i-Nāṣiri*, Bib. Ind. ed., p. 247; and Barani, *Ta'rīkh-i-Fīrūz Shāhī*, Bib. Ind. ed., pp. 106, 182.

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areas where direct relations between the new rulers and the peasants might have been established.[127] Nearly a century of experience and adaptation cleared the ground for the radical step taken in the first decade of the fourteenth century. 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī (1296-1316), the most powerful and successful of the Sultans, decreed that the land-revenue was henceforth to be set at half the produce and was to be levied separately on the holding of each individual cultivator.[128] The exact magnitude of land-revenue demanded under 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī's successors is not stated, but there is no reason to believe that the standard of one-half was ever substantially altered by them.[129]

It must, of course, be recognized that any standard of revenue demand had to be theoretical; and the actual share in the crop, except under simple crop-sharing arrangements, must have varied from locality to locality and year to year. Thus under 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī the land was measured and a fixed tax in kind on each unit of area (*biswa*), presumably worked out on the basis of an approximation to the standard, was levied irrespective of the current year's harvest.[130] A further variation was possible, generally to the disadvantage of the revenue-payer, when tax in grain (or the authorities' share of the crop) was commuted into cash at market prices. Payment in cash had become quite widely prevalent by the fourteenth century, although 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī himself preferred collection in grain.[131] Besides the land-revenue, other burdens were also imposed upon the peasants; in particular, the tax on cattle or grazing tax.[132]

127. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

128. The basic authority is Barani, op. cit., p. 287. For an interpretation of the passage, see Moreland, op. cit., pp. 32-33, 224-27.

129. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 44, 48 and fn., 62. I. H. Qureshi, *The Administration of the Sultanate of Delhi* (Lahore, 1942), pp. 110-13, puts forward the view that the general standard of revenue-demand both before and after 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī was only a fifth of the produce. But the evidence he offers and the interpretation he seeks to impose on it are both difficult to accept.

130. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 33, 224, 226.

131. Ibid. pp. 11, 114, 136-37.

132. Barani, op. cit., pp. 287-88. Shams Siraj 'Afif, *Ta'rīkh-i-Fīrūz*

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The revenue resources so created were distributed among the ruling class principally through the Sultan's assigning to individuals the right to levy the revenue in particular territories. Territorial units assigned in this way were termed *iqta's*, while the territory whose revenues were directly collected for the Sultan's own treasury was designated *khāliṣa*. Both these terms are Arabic in origin and represent long-established institutions of the polity of Islamic countries.[133]

If appropriation of the surplus produced by the peasant above the requirements of his subsistence is taken to be the principal criterion of landed property, the *iqta'* may be considered the basic unit of such property, and the *iqta'*-holders as forming the main class of landed proprietors. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the nature of the *iqta'* and the rights and position of its holders in some detail.

Broadly speaking, three stages in the history of the *iqta'* under the Sultans can be distinguished.

(a) It was natural, in the earlier phase, for the Turkish Sultans to assign different regions as *iqta's* to their commanders, who were required to maintain themselves and their troops out of the revenues of the *iqta's*. The *iqta'* then stood for a revenue assignment as well as an administrative charge, and the *muqti's* (=*wālīs*) or holders of *iqta's* were also governors.

The *iqta's* were constantly transferred from one person to another—a practice which makes the conventional English rendering of *iqta'* as "fief" particularly misleading.[134]

Besides the troops maintained by the *muqti's* out of the revenue of their *iqta's*, the Sultan had his own personal troops (*qalb*). In the 13th century men of the royal cavalry were paid by assigning them revenues of villages around the capital and in the Doab country. These assignments too were termed *iqta's*;

Shāhī, Bib. Ind., 98, says rhetorically, that if a peasant had two milch-cows, one was taken away from him.

133. For the development of the concept and nature of *iqta'*, see F. Lokkegaard, *Islamic Taxation in the Classic Period* (Copenhagen, 1950), p. 14ff.

134. Cf. Moreland in *JIH*, viii, pt. i, 1-8; *Agrarian System of Moslem India*, pp. 216-23.

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but these tended to become semi-permanent, and even hereditary.[135]

(b) Under the Khaljīs and the early Tughlaqs (1290-1351), as the administration of the Sultanate was consolidated, the earlier simple arrangements were considerably modified. The transfers of *iqta's* became even more frequent; at the same time, the *muqti's* no longer remained in absolute control of the revenues of their *iqta's*. They had to submit accounts of their collection and expenditure,[136] and to send the balances (*fawāzil*) to the king's treasury.[137] An estimate of the revenue-paying capacity (*jama'*) of each locality was prepared. The personal salaries of the officers were fixed in terms of cash; and the revenues of particular districts or territories, whose estimated revenue-income equalled their sanctioned pay, were assigned to them.[138] The pay of the troops under them was now deemed to be a direct charge on the Sultan's treasury rather than on the commanders;[139] and a portion of the revenues of the *iqta'* was set apart for the payment of the troops of the *muqti's*.[140] Such limitations of the authority of the *muqti'* necessitated the appointment of Sultan's officers within the *iqta's*, a practice which apparently had begun under Balban (1266-1286).[141] The tendency towards royal intervention reached its peak under Sultan Muḥammad Tughlaq (1325-51). In several cases he handed over the collection of the revenue of the *iqta's* to either revenue-farmers or his own financial officers, the commanders

135. Barani, op. cit., pp. 61-64. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

136. This appears from Barani, op. cit., pp. 430-31, 556, and 'Afif, op. cit., pp. 341, 408, 414-15. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 43, 220-21.

137. Barani, op. cit., pp. 220-21, 468. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., p. 220.

138. The most direct evidence is 'Afif, 94, but an inference for the prevalence of this system may be drawn from Shihabuddin al-'Umarī, *Maṣālik-al-Absār*, portion on India, ed. K. A. Faruqi (Delhi), p. 26. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 51-52, 56-57; he calls the estimate of revenue income "Valuation".

139. *Maṣālik-al-Absār*, 25, where the interesting observation is also made that this distinguished the Indian *iqta'* system from that of Syria and Egypt. In these two countries the commanders themselves paid their troops by assigning them lands. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

140. Barani, op. cit., pp. 430-31.

141. Cf. Barani, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

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or *amīrs* posted in the *iqta's*, presumably drawing their pay in cash from the local treasury and having nothing to do directly with revenue-collection.[142]

One form of *iqta'*, the assignment in lieu of salary to the cavalry troops of the king, was abolished by 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī and the troops under him and his successors drew their pay in cash.[143]

In general, the *khāliṣa*, comprising lands whose revenues were reserved for the king's treasury, appears to have expanded very greatly. Still it seems to have consisted not of shifting territories scattered throughout the empire, as was the case with the *khāliṣa* under the Mughals, but of a large block of territory around Delhi, principally the country of the Doab.[144]

(c) With the accession of Sultan Fīrūz Tughlaq in 1351, which took place after a severe political crisis created by rebellions of a large section of the ruling class, the entire trend of the preceding period was reversed, and a series of concessions were granted by the Sultan to his officers. First of all, the *jama'* or estimated revenue-income was fixed permanently,[145] so that the assignees obtained all benefits of increase in actual revenue collection. While *iqta'* transfers were still effected,[146] they appear to have become rarer. Indeed Fīrūz Tughlaq's declared policy of bestowing administrative offices upon the sons of the previous incumbents[147] suggests strongly that *iqta's* too were similarly treated when their holders died. Finally, he instituted the practice of paying his troopers by assigning them revenues (*wajh*), thus re-creating the small *iqta's* under a new name.

142. For the farming (*muqata'a*) of *iqta's*, see Barani, op. cit., pp. 487-88. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 46-48. Ibn Battuta tells us incidentally of the arrangements in the *iqta'* of Amroha, where the *wali al-Kharāj* (revenue collector) and the *amīr* (commander) were different officers independent of each other (*Rehla*, tr. Mahdi Husain, Baroda, 1953, pp. 144-46).

143. Barani, op. cit., pp. 323-24, 'Afif, op. cit., pp. 94-96, Moreland, op. cit., p. 39, however, goes too far when he supposes that 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī wished to dispense with the large *iqta's* as well.

144. Cf. Barani, op. cit., pp. 323-24.

145. 'Afif, op. cit., p. 94. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., p. 57.

146. E.g., 'Afif, op. cit., p. 220.

147. *Futūhāt-i-Fīrūz-Shāhī* (Aligarh ed.) 22. Cf. 'Afif. op. cit., p. 482

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Moreover, he made both the assignments and the posts of troopers practically hereditary.[148]

The concessions that Fīrūz made proved to be of long duration. Under the Lodīs (1451-1526) the administrative charges and revenue assignments were assimilated, so that *sarkārs* and *parganas* represented administrative divisions as well as assignments.[149] Like Fīrūz, Sikandar Lodī (1489-1517) too did not claim the balance if the revenue-income of the assignee increased;[150] and he is also said to have confirmed the assignment in the event of an assignee's death upon one of the latter's sons, chosen by the Sultan himself.[151] The principal commanders raised and maintained their troops by sub-assigning parts of the territory under their charge to their subordinates, who, in turn, could pay the troops by the same means.[152] The ultimate assignee, however, levied the land-revenue directly from the peasants.[153]

From this survey the principal features of the three stages in the history of the *iqta'* system may thus be stated: First, during the 13th century there was a simple division of the empire among tribute-receiving governors. Then in the first half of the 14th century there took place an enlargement of the revenue demand, and so of the income of the *iqta'*, while an extreme degree of royal control was established over the *iqta'*. Finally, from the middle of the 14th to the early years of the 16th century, there was a reversion to the simpler form of *iqta'*-organization, but with the difference, perhaps, that the assignees directly appropriated the bulk of the peasant's surplus for themselves.

148. 'Afif, op. cit., pp. 94-96, 220-21.

149. Cf. I. H. Siddiqi in *Medieval India Quarterly*, v (1963), 26-31.

150. *Waqi'āt-i-Mushtāqī*, Br. M.MS., Add. 11, 633, f. 26a. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., p. 72.

151. 'Abbās Khān, *Tuhfa-i' Akbar-Shāhī*, MS. I.O., 218, f. 27a. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., p. 68.

152. This appears from 'Abbās Khān's account of the career of Farīd's father, Hasan, and of Farīd's own arrangements in his father's assignment in Bihar. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

153. See 'Abbās Khān's account of Farīd's proceedings as revenue collector in his father's assignment in Bihar, ff. 17b-19a.

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These developments in the *iqta'* system appear to be closely related to the changes in the composition of the ruling class. In the first stage the composition was relatively stable, the ruling class being confined to royal slaves of nomad-Turkish origin and their families (in Barani's phrase, "The Forty Slaves of Iltutmish").[154] But along with the inauguration of a regime of monarchical despotism under 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī, a series of veritable upheavals occurred in the composition of the ruling class. The older elements were destroyed:[155] "Upstarts", Indianized Turks, Indian slaves, and foreign immigrants now formed the bulk of the Sultan's bureaucracy. Alongside the loss of its exclusiveness, this class also lost its stability. The contemporary historian noticed three successive groups of officers, one substituted for the other, during the two decades of 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī's reign.[156] Even more sensational phenomena were witnessed under Muḥammad Tughlaq: large-scale recruitment of foreigners,[157] still greater recruitment from the lower strata of the Indian population[158] and from Hindus;[159] and an attempted wholesale destruction of the older, chiefly military elements (represented by the cavalry officer-corps, the *amīrān-i ṣada*).[160]

Such sweeping changes in the composition of the class that in effect held the bulk of landed property could only have been possible because of the nature of the *iqta'* system. The individual members of the ruling class had no claim whatsoever to any particular parcel of land or locality and thus could be provided with, or deprived of, their income at the will of the king. It would seem that for a time the concentration of such authority in the hands of the king, implying immense political and econo-

154. Barani, op. cit., pp. 25-28. Cf. M. Habib, Introduction to Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, ii (Aligarh ed., 1952), 94ff.

155. Barani, op. cit., pp. 250-51.

156. Ibid. p. 336.

157. Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, tr., pp. 4-5, 107.

158. Barani, op. cit., pp. 504-05; Cf. K. M. Ashraf, *Life and Conditions of the People of Hindustan* (2nd ed., Delhi, 1959), pp. 63-64.

159. Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, tr., p. 8; 'Islami, *Futuhu's Salātīn*, ed. Usha, (Madras, 1948); Barani, op. cit., pp. 504-05.

160. Barani, op. cit., pp. 503-04, 516-17.

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mic centralization, was necessary for the establishment of the new mechanism of exploitation. Once this had been accomplished, the sentiment in favour of permanent and semi-hereditary right in the assignments became irresistible. Fīrūz Tughlaq at last made a complete capitulation to this sentiment, winning in return the fulsome gratitude of the nobles and their hangerson.[161] He publicly announced the policy of letting son succeed father to official posts;[162] and but for his large collection of slaves he scrupulously kept away all new elements, thus paying full respect to the principle of birth, which was so much lauded by the historian Barani.[163] The fullest degree of fixity of rights for its members was achieved by the nobility under the Lodīs. It now consisted of Afghān tribal leaders, whose control over the revenues of their territorial charges tended to be hereditary, and derived only partly from the king's favour.[164]

On the whole, unlike the ruling class of the previous period, that of the Sultanate was mainly urban in character. The *iqta'*-holders, subject to periodic transfer from one locality or region to another, could not base their authority upon the control of any particular rural area. Many of them lived or served in Delhi, and presumably at other big towns, far from their current assignments. They had, therefore, a strong tendency to commute their revenues into cash. Even under 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī, when they were asked to collect the land revenue in kind it was laid down that the grain should be sold to merchants at fixed prices "by the side of the field".[165] Since the land revenue constituted the bulk of the peasant's surplus, large-scale trade between town and country must have resulted. This in turn promoted the cultivation of superior, or cash, crops. For the first time in the 14th century we find the substitution of high-priced crops for

161. For samples of the praise showered on Fīrūz Tughlaq see Barani op. cit., pp. 548, 555, and 'Afif, passim.

162. *Futūḥāt-i-Fīrūz-Shāhī*, op. cit.

163. Barani, op. cit., p. 18; and his praise of Fīrūz for keeping his father's officers, p. 549.

164. Cf. R. Williams. *An Emnire-builder of the Sixteenth Centurv*, (Delhi, reprint), pp 15-18, 159-60.

165. Barani, op. cit., pp. 304-05.

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the low-grade crops meant for local consumption being regarded as an object of state policy.[166]

The large export of grain and other produce from the country, caused by the exaction of the revenue, maintained a class of specialized grain merchants (*kārvānīs*, the later *banjārās*) which appears for the first time now in our historical record.[167] On the other hand it is said that the *Multānīs* (Hindu merchants) and *sāhs* (moneylenders) of Delhi became enormously rich by advancing very large loans to the Turkish nobles against drafts on the revenues of their *iqta's*.[168] The *iqta'*-system may thus be said to have forced in some ways the pace of medieval commercial development.

The immense drain of a substantial part of rural produce to the towns in the form of revenues of the *iqta'*-holders helped to create large town-populations. Town crafts also grew. So great was the demand of the nobility that slaves were trained to be artisans in large numbers;[169] and the Sultans, and so presumably also the nobles, maintained large workshops (*kārkhānas*) where free and servile artisans worked to meet their needs.[170]

Besides the *iqta'*, there was also one other form of alienation of the king's revenue, which may be briefly mentioned. This is what Moreland terms grants. These grants were assignments of revenues of relatively small areas, given to persons for life. These were often in fact hereditary, but were subject to resumption at the Sultan's pleasure.[171] These were known generally as *milk* (*pl. amlāk*), *idrārāt* or *madad-i ma'āsh;* and some of them as *in'ām*. They were given to theologians, scholars, petty courtiers and retired officials and thus chiefly maintained the Muslim educated class. Some of the grants were in the nature of endowment (*waqf, pl. auqāf*) for Muslim religious shrines. The nobles made grants out of their own *iqta's:* but these were pre-

166. Barani, op. cit., p. 498. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., p. 51.
167. Barani, op. cit., pp. 304, 306.
168. Ibid. p. 120. Cf. I. Habib, in *Comparative Studies in Soicety and History* (The Hague), vi. no. 4, 407-08.
169. 'Afif, op. cit., pp. 267-73.
170. 'Afif, op. cit., pp 10, 32, 39, 58, 63.
171. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 10, 32, 39, 58, 63.

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sumably for as long as they themselves had their *iqta's*. From figures given by 'Afif it seems that under Fīrūz, who bestowed the largest number of grants, the revenues so alienated amounted to less than 5.5 per cent of the whole.[172] Much of the area covered by the grants was in waste lands, which the grantees were expected to bring under cultivation.[173]

The Turkish conquests resulted naturally in a considerable depression in the position of the previous ruling class. It was not in the main exterminated, but subjugated, its members being converted initially into tributary chiefs. In the 11th century, we hear of the *kharāj* being collected from *ṭhākurs* (*ṭhakkuras*) in Ghaznavide Panjab;[174] and in the 13th century, similarly, from *rā'is*, *rānās* and *rāwats*.[175] The very designations of these tributary rural chiefs proclaim them to be members or descendants of the previons aristocracy. But we know practically nothing of the social structure and property-relations existing under them during this early phase.

With the increased pressure of the Sultanate ruling class, beginning with 'Alā'uddīn Khaljī's land-revenue measures, the modern historian can penetrate the countryside almost at the heels of the Sultan's revenue-collector. The *rā'is* and *rānās* now represent the bigger chiefs. Of lower status are the *chaudhurīs* (Hindu headmen of groups of "100" villages),[176] *khūts* and *muqaddams* (village headmen). Persons of this second class, who might have also included men depressed from amongst the *rā'is* and *rānās*, seem to have had large land-holdings of their own, which were generally not liable to land-revenue. In return for this share in the agricultural surplus, these rural and village "chiefs" collected the land-revenue from the peasantry on behalf of the Sultan and his assignees.[177]

172. 'Afif, op. cit., pp. 94, 359-60.

173. Cf. I. H. Qureshi, in *Proceedings of Indian Historical Records Commission*, 31st Session (1944), p. 61.

174. *Ta'rīkh-i Baihaqi*, ed. Ghani and Faiyaz (Tehran, AH, 1324), p. 407.

175. See note 126.

176. Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, tr. Mahdi Husain, p. 123.

177. This paragraph is based mainly on the following passages in our sources: Barani, op. cit., pp. 287-91, 429-31; and 'Afif, op. cit., 36-39.

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A very interesting development, to which little attention has been paid so far, appears to be the social consolidation of this superior rural class, through the absorption of its various elements, as clans or sub-castes, into the great Rajput caste over the larger part of northern India. Both the term *Rājpūt* (*Rājaputra*) as name for the caste,[178] and the sense of the unity of its components, appear suddenly in the Persian authorities of the 16th century, and must, therefore, have quietly evolved in the preceding period. This caste-cohesion of the rural aristocracy possibly developed out of a real class-cohesion, as higher elements were pressed into the lower ranks of the rural aristocracy. The history of the term *zamīndār*, denoting the superior rural class in the Mughal period (16th and 17th centuries), indicates an evolution parallel to the term Rajput. In the latter part of the 14th century, when it first appears, it only indicates the big chiefs of the level of *rā'is* and *rānās*.[179] Within a century and a half it became the standard designation for the larger class, which previously had no name because presumably it had no integral entity.

At its lower levels the rural aristocracy must have sometimes stood at the fringe of the big peasantry. The occasional vagueness of the line of distinction between the two is indicated by the contemporary use of the term *ri'āyā* or *ra'iyat*, which stood sometimes for the common peasantry and sometimes for the rural revenue-payers in general, thus including the headmen and other superior elements. At the same time there seems to have been considerable stratification within the peasantry. A sharp antithesis between the two extremes among the peasants is suggested by the historian's remark that 'Alā'uddīn K' aljī imposed the same rate of land-revenue upon the lands of the *khūt* as well as *balāhar*.[180] The *khūt* signified the large village

Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 29-30, 33, 38-39, 41-42, 224-26. 'Ala'uddīn Khaljī had imposed, and Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq abolished, land-revenue upon the lands of the *khūts* and *muqaddams*.

178. Cf. S. H. Hodivala, *Studies in Indo-Muslim History* (Bombay, 1939), p. 352.

179. E.g., 'Afif, op. cit., p. 170. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., p. 18.

180. Barani, op. cit., p. 287.

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landholder, presumably the headman, seeking to keep his lands revenue-free and to shift the burden of the revenue demand upon the "weak"; the *balāhar* was the village menial (of the lowliest, untouchable caste), allotted a small plot for his bare subsistence by the village community.[181]

In so far as there was a tendency on the part of the superior elements in the countryside to escape from paying land-revenue on their own lands, while collecting it from the mass of the peasants, besides levying their own imposts on them, there was an obvious conflict of interests between the two classes. Barani's passage on 'Alā'uddīn Ḵẖaljī's measures suggests that the Sultan consciously utilized this contradiction by standing forth as the protector of the "weak" against "the strong" in the village and seeking to enlarge the state's share of the surplus produce at the expense chiefly of the rural aristocracy.[182] But when, following Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's concessions to the *ḵẖuts* and *muqaddams*,[183] Muḥammad Tughlaq increased the revenue-demand again,[184] it provoked an armed uprising in the Doab (*c.* A.D. 1330), which, from the historian's description of it, appears as a rebellion of peasants led by the lower rural aristocracy, viz, the *ḵẖūts* and *muqaddams*.[185] Apparently, the two rural classes united when they were alike hit by the newly imposed burden. Their uprising, by its severity, extent and duration, occupies a very significant place in the annals of India's peasant revolts.

2. The 16th century saw the establishment of the Mughal empire in India. This empire not only united the large part of India within its limits, but also attained a degree of centralized authority and stability far surpassing that of any of the earlier dynasties of the Sultans. Although it was founded by Bābur in

181. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 32*n*, 224-26; I. Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India*, pp. 120-21.

182. Barani, op. cit., pp. 287-88.

183. Ibid. pp. 429-31.

184. Ibid. pp. 472-73. Cf. Moreland, op. cit., p. 48 & *n*.

185. Barani, op. cit., pp. 472-73, 479-80. Cf. Ibn Battuta, *Rehla*, tr., pp. 153-58.

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1526, its classic period begins with the accession of Akbar, 1556, and ends with the death of Aurangzeb, 1707.

For the Mughal empire our records of all kinds are very extensive; and for the first time in Indian history we can claim to have direct evidence for almost all significant aspects of society. The day is still awaited when at least the major part of this evidence will have been used by students of the subject. Nevertheless, the broad features of the economy and the social and political structure appear now to be fairly clear.[186]

A study of the official Mughal area statistics and other geographical information indicates that the extent of cultivation then was about half of what it was about the beginning of this century in the middle Ganga basin and the Indus basin and in central India; and from two-thirds to one-fifth in the other regions.[187] Large stretches of virgin soil were, therefore, still available for cultivation in almost all regions, except perhaps some territories such as the Doab and the region around Agra and Delhi. As far as the means of cultivation are concerned, they were practically the same as existing about the year 1900, and the only important factor missing was the extensive irrigation-canal system laid out by the British chiefly in the Indus basin and the Upper Ganga region.[188] In such circumstances peasant cultivation had to be the most widely prevalent form of agricultural production. At the same time, in view of the availability of virgin soil, no intrinsic value could yet be attached to most of the land under the plough. It is significant that 17th century peasants are known to have been in debt to moneylenders for their seed and cattle, and for meeting the revenue-demand, but not for the land under their occupation.[189]

"Landed property", therefore, could not have consisted of

186. In this section, at many points I have drawn heavily upon my own work, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India*. References to sources and modern works cited there are not, as a rule, repeated in this paper.

187. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 1-24. Moreland offers a still lower estimate (*India at the Death of Akbar*, London, 1920, pp. 20-22).

188. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 24-36.

189. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vi, no. 4, 394.

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any right to a particular parcel of land. In the absence of full-fledged serfdom, it had to lie principally in a share of the produce wherever the peasant might cultivate, within the village, or the district, or the whole empire. The Mughals firmly consolidated the tendency already at work under the Sultans: namely, to claim from the peasant the bulk of his surplus produce. Such a claim it was now possible to enforce particularly because of the growth of commerce and the extensive cultivation for the market.[190] The rapid spread of the tobacco crop within the first 50 years of the 17th century throughout the length and breadth of India is an index of how quickly the peasant was now able to follow the market.[191] Cash-nexus could now be established more widely than ever before;[192] and this immensely simplified the assessment and collection of land-revenue.

The detailed information that we possess about the methods of assessment and collection of the land-revenue under the Mughals enables us to form an idea of the magnitude of the revenue demand. When the demand, as under the *zabt* system, was expressed in cash, the actual part of the produce which the peasant had to part with in order to pay the revenue must have varied from harvest to harvest and locality to locality. But the rate had itself been determined on the basis of its being one-third of the estimated produce, and the demand in practice probably amounted to much more.[193] Under other systems, one-half appears often to have been the standard rate of demand. In some outlying or arid regions the standard was lower, but in certain fertile areas, such as coastal Gujarat, it reached three-quarters of the produce.[194]

190. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 61-81.
191. Ibid. pp. 45-46, 81.
192. Ibid. pp. 236-40.
193. The revenue rates under the *zabt* system were not permanent and were changed from time to time. Moreover, the whole system could be replaced by another, such as assessment in kind or crop-sharing. Revenue demand could, therefore, be adjusted without much difficulty to a rise in prices. This may be the reason why the great rise in prices due to the influx of silver during the earlier part of the 17th century did not create any noticeable disturbance in the mechanism of rural exploitation. (For this 17th century inflation, see I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 81-89, 327, 384-94).
194. Ibid. pp. 190-96.

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When the bulk of the peasant's surplus was thus being claimed for the king, it is not surprising that contemporary European travellers should have declared, without one voice of dissent, that the king was the owner of the soil in India.[195] Even one Indian writer of the earlier half of the 18th century asserted that the *Kharāj* (land-revenue) was due to the king because of his property-right (*milkiyat*) in the land.[196] No official Indian writer, however, subscribed to this view; and an Indian jurist explicitly rejected the notion.[197] This rejection may partly have been due to the fact that the king did not claim the right to eject the peasant occupant of the land so long as he continued to cultivate it.[198] There was also the spectacle of the king's buying particular plots of land, from his subjects for his own use, to inhibit any speculation about royal ownership of the entire land.[199]

Whether the right that the Mughal emperor claimed was in name proprietary or not, in terms of our discussion he must be supposed by his exaction of the land-revenue to have enjoyed a major share of the fruits of proprietary possession (which did not then exist as a single integral right at all). It rested with his will to dispose of this enormous tribute. Over the larger portion of the empire he transferred his right to collect the land-revenue and other taxes due to him to certain of his subjects. The areas whose revenues were thus assigned were known as *jāgīrs* (less often, *tuyūls*); and the assignees were termed *jāgīrdārs*.

The *jāgīrdārs* were officers and servants of the emperor, and their *jāgīrs* were normally assigned to them in lieu of their pay.[200] Each officer of the Mughal emperor was given a dual numerical rank (*manṣab*), the first number representing his *zāt*, and the

195. Ibid. p. 111.

196. Tekchand 'Bahar', *Bahar-i-'Ajam* (*s. c. kharāj*).

197. Qazi Muhammad Ala, *Risala Ahkam al Arazi*, MS. Aligarh, Abdus Salām, 'Arabiya (4): 331/101, ff. 43b. 44b.

198. Ibid. ff. 47b-48a. Since land was abundant, there was in any case no practical use in claiming this right.

199. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 111-12.

200. There were extremely rare cases when a *jāgīr* was assigned not against a rank, but as *in am*, free bestowal, without placing the assignee under any obligation.

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second his *sawār* rank. The *zāt* rank determined, according to the sanctioned schedule, the personal pay of the *manṣab*-holder (*manṣabdār*); and the *sawār* rank the size of the cavalry contingent maintained by him for the emperor's service as well as the pay he was to receive to meet his expenses for maintaining it. The total amounts sanctioned for both *zāt* and *sawār* made up his pay-claim (*talab*); and this could be met either by payment in cash from the imperial treasury or by assigning to him territories in *jāgīr* whose revenue-income as officially estimated (*jama'*, *jama'-dāmī*) had exactly to equal the pay due to him.[201]

Besides the ordinary *jāgīr*, there was a kind known as *watan jāgīr*. A *watan jāgīr* was really the territory of a subordinate chief who had been enrolled in the imperial service, and granted a *manṣab*; his pay was then supposed to be met by the income of his home territory, which was treated as his hereditary *jāgīr*.[202] The relative extent of area covered by *watan jāgīrs* was not large. These in the main comprised many of the subjugated kingdoms of Rajputana, Saurashtra, Central India and the Himalayan sub-hills.

Lands not assigned in *jāgīr* formed a category known as *khāliṣ'-i sharīfa*, the revenue being collected here directly for the king's treasury. The total extent of the *khāliṣa* varied. Akbar (1556-1605) once resumed all *jāgīrs* to the *khāliṣa* in the large portion of his empire; later in his reign it appears to have accounted for one-fourth of the total revenues. Under Jahāngīr (1605-27) its *jama'* (estimated revenue-income) fell to less than 5 per cent of the total *jama'* of the empire. Under Shāhjahān it was gradually expanded, so that its *jama'* rose to one-seventh, and early under Aurangzeb (1659-1707) to nearly one-fifth of that of the empire.[203] The emperor drew his cash income mainly

201. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 257-66. Moreland was the first modern writer to appreciate the essential aspects of the *jāgīr* system (*Agrarian System of Moslem India*, passim). Similarly, in *JRAS* (1936), pp. 641-65, he brought out the most significant features of the *manṣab* organization of the Mughals.

202. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 184-85.

203. Ibid. pp. 271-73.

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out of the revenues of the *khāliṣa*. Out of this he paid some *manṣabdārs* in cash and maintained his own personal troops (*aḥadīs*), artillery and the whole palace establishment, besides meeting expenditure in the provinces

The Mughal system of *jāgīrs* was essentially similar to that of the *iqta'* system under the Sultans. In fact, in the Mughal period the two terms were considered to be synonymous. But in most respects the *jāgīr* was closer to a pure revenue-assignment than the *iqta'* had ever been. It was never a fixed territorial unit, and had no connexion, except for convenience in assignment, with the administrative units, *sarkārs* and *parganas*. These latter units had their own officers, appointed by the emperor and independent of the assignees, in whose *jāgīrs* the units might be placed, whether wholly in one man's *jāgīr* or divided up among those of several.[204] The official assumption was that the *jāgīrdārs* or their agents could collect the land-revenue only in accordance with the imperial regulations and levy only such other taxes as were authorized.[205]

The *jāgīr* of a person was usually transferred from one locality to another every three or four years. Each increase in *manṣab* of anyone or a new posting must have disturbed the existing distribution of *jāgīrs*, initiating a chain of *jāgīr*-transfers. This was apart from the fact that the Mughal court was deeply committed to the principle of periodic *jāgīr*-transfers as a means of preventing its officers from developing into local autonomous rulers.[206] Though less affected by transfers, the *khāliṣa* too consisted of shifting territories scattered all over the empire.[207]

It is not possible to draw a map showing the territories of individual *jāgīrs* held in the empire or in any of the provinces in any particular year. But there is evidence available which shows that the assignments held by the big *jāgīrdārs* covered a very large portion of the empire. This may be seen from the data extracted from the official list of the higher *manṣabdārs*, with

204. Ibid. p. 261 and *fn.*
205. Moreland, op. cit., pp. 98, 138; I. Habib, op. cit., p. 273ff.
206. I. Habib, op. cit., p. 260 and *fn.*
207. Ibid. pp. 270-71, and *fn.*

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specifications of their *zat* and *sawār* ranks, given for the year 1647.[208] Since the pay schedules of the time have also survived,[209] it is possible to work out the total salary bill of the various ranks of *manṣabdārs*. Only a very small number of these *manṣabdārs* was paid in cash out of the revenues of *khāliṣa* (whose *jama'* in any case during this particular year was about 13.6 per cent of the total *jama'* of the empire);[210] and so the pay statistics would not only indicate the share of the various ranks of *manṣabdārs* in the total revenues of the empire, but also roughly indicate the relative area lying within their *jāgīrs*.

Our information may be tabulated as follows:[211]

	Total salary bill, for both zāt & sawār ranks (millions of dams)	*Percentage of estimated revenue-income (Jama') of the empire.*
4 Princes of Imperial family with ranks above 7,000 *zāt*	724.0	8.2
21 *manṣabdār's of* 5,000 to 7,000 *zāt*	1,417.7	16.1
43 *manṣabdārs* of 3,000 to 4,000 *zāt*	1,080.2	12.3
151 *manṣabdārs* of 1,000 to 2,500 *zāt*	1,454.0	16.5
226 *manṣabdārs* of 500 to 900 *zāt*	735.0	8.1
Total: 445 *manṣabdārs* of 500 and above	5,410.9	61.5

208. Lāhorī, *Bādshāhnāma*, Bib. Ind. ed., ii, 717-52. There is a similar list for 1637, but other data, such as the *jama'* of the empire in that year, are not available.

209. One such schedule is printed in the *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan's Reign*, published by Daftar-i-Dīwānī (Hyderabad, 1950), pp. 79-84.

210. From figures given in Lahori, op. cit., pp. 710, 712-13.

211. I am grateful to my colleague, Mr. A. J. Qaisar, who has let me

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The significance of this table can be judged better when it is noted that the total number of *manṣabdārs* then was 8,000;[212] so that there were about 7,555 *manṣabdārs* holding ranks of below 500 *zāt*, who are not listed by the official chronicler. Since the *khāliṣa* expenditure, apart from that on paying cash salaries, has to be allowed for, it would seem that these 7,555 *manṣabdārs* probably accounted for barely 25 per cent, or at the most 30 per cent, of the total revenues of the empire. On the other hand 445 of the higher *manṣabdārs* controlled over 61 per cent of the revenue-income of the empire, and must have held well over half of the empire in *jāgīr*. At the top of the pyramid a mere 68 princes and nobles drew 36.6 per cent of the total revenue of the empire, and presumably held nearly a third of its area within their *jāgīrs*.

There is one consideration to be borne in mind in interpreting these figures: the high cost of maintenance of the established

Class of manṣabdārs	*Total salary bill (million dams)*	*Pay against zāt ranks (million dams)*	*Percentage of total salary bill*	*Pay against sawār ranks (million dams)*	*Percentage of total salary bill*
Princes of above 7,000 *zāt*	724.0	124.0	17.1	600.0	82.9
Manṣabdārs of 5,000-7,000 *zāt*	1,417.7	229.7	16.2	1,188.0	83.8
Manṣabdārs of 3,000-4,000 *zāt*	1,080.2	266.6	24.7	813.6	75.3
Manṣabdārs of 1,000-2,500 *zāt*	1,454.0	398.8	27.4	1,055.2	72.6
Manṣabdārs of 500-900 *zāt*	735.0	209.6	28.5	525.4	71.5

use the figures worked out by him and submitted in a paper contributed to the Indian History Congress, Allahabad session, 1965. He has naturally excluded all *manṣabdārs* reported in the list as dead, or otherwise not holding *manṣabs* that particular year.

212. Lāhorī, op. cit., p. 715.

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system. Each *manṣabdār* was required to maintain from his own income a contingent whose size was determined by his *sawār* rank, it being assumed that the pay for the *sawār* rank would cover this expenditure. The pay for the *sawār* rank actually accounted for the larger part of the salary-bill, as may be seen from the figures on page 305.[213]

It would appear from this table that about three-quarters of the higher *manṣabdārs'* income was spent on keeping the soldiery. Actually, several *jāgīrdārs* used to sub-assign parts of their *jāgīrs* to their troopers in lieu of their pay.[214] It is, however, quite possible that since the Mughals, unlike the Sultans, made no attempt to demarcate the portions of assignments earmarked for the pay of the assignees' troops, the *manṣabdārs* kept a much larger portion of the revenues of their assignments than was due on the basis of their personal or *zāt* pay alone.

Even when the expenditure on the troops has been considered, the fact remains that less than 450 men disposed of over three-fifths of the revenues of the empire. When it is recalled that the revenue comprised the bulk of the peasant's surplus and the empire covered the larger part of the Indian sub-continent, it becomes possible to appreciate the extreme degree of concentration of wealth existing in Mughal India. Seldom, except perhaps for the present, has the contrast been so great in Indian history as then between "the rich in their great superfluity and the utter subjection and poverty of the common people".[215]

This small ruling class of the Mughal empire consisted, in theory, of men appointed to the imperial service by the emperor at his pleasure. In practice, however, considerable heed was paid to the principle of heredity and birth. Sons, indeed, did not inherit the *manṣabs* and *jāgīrs* of their father. On the contrary, all other worldly possessions of the dead noble escheated to the crown, so that even these could not be inherited. But the emperor usually left a large portion for the heirs, generally selecting one

213. I am, again, indebted for these figures to Mr Qaisar who has worked them out.

214. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 283, 285-86.

215. Ibid. p. 320. citing Pelsaert.

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of them for the largest share and special favour.[216] Often *manṣabs* or increments in *manṣabs* if they were already in service were granted to them, but they had generally to start from a much lower rung of the ladder. Although direct succession was thus not possible, the leading families of the Muslim nobles of the same racial groups were often related to each other, and we can trace the same families supplying some of the leading officers of successive emperors. Members of such families were known as *ḳẖānazāds*. Among the Rajput officers the dynastic element was still more preponderant, the *watan jāgīrs* of the Rajput chiefs being hereditary, but not divisible.[217]

The Mughal ruling class was not, however, a closed body, and there was constant recruitment from amongst Central Asian and Persian immigrants of "aristocratic" families, from Muslim "martial" clans, from amongst the *zamīndār*-chiefs (especially Rajputs), from ruling groups in the annexed kingdoms (of which the Marathas and the Dakhinis were the most significant examples), and from the small intelligentsia and the financial services.[218] Direct recruitment from the world of commerce appears to have been extremely rare.[219]

The Mughal ruling class was thus extremely heterogeneous, and contained elements from practically all regions of the empire and large numbers of outsiders. By the system of empire-wide postings of *manṣabdārs* and transfers of *jāgīrs* the local ties of the various elements, wherever they existed, tended to loosen further. While this was an important factor in maintaining the integrity of the Mughal empire, it also resulted in the *jāgīrdārs* having no customary links with the local population, nor any long-term interests in the improvement of the *jāgīr*. It, therefore, encouraged an excessive exploitation of the peasantry.[220]

216. Cf. M. Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (Bombay, 1966), p. 64.

217. In many Rajput dynasties the law of primogeniture prevailed, but it was by no means universal.

218. Cf. M. Athar Ali, op. cit., pp. 11-33.

219. The famous Mīr Jumla began his career as a merchant, but when admitted to Mughal service, he was already the most powerful noble in the Golkunda kingdom.

220. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 319-21.

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It may, however, be supposed that the extraction of such a large portion of agrarian produce by so few might lead, through their expenditure and investment of the resources so obtained, to a certain amount of economic growth. The Mughal period, it is true, saw the rise of a number of large towns, and the relative number of urban population in Mughal India might well have been much larger than it was in 1900.[221] Yet the basis of this urban growth remained largely parasitical: provisioning of the needs of the large number of troops and attendants of the nobles, and fashioning of luxuries needed by the potentates. The Mughal nobles might invest part of their wealth in usury and commerce, but they also often used their administrative authority to monopolize trade or even requisition the labour of artisans.[222] When quite excessive profits by these means were available to them, it is not surprising that they did not pay any attention to the improvement of the tools and organization of production, in which sphere not even one invention or innovation, indigenous or adapted from Europe, is recorded.

Like the Delhi Sultans, the Mughal emperors granted the revenues of particular areas of lands to individuals, generally for life, and always subject to resumption or reduction. These grants were known as *madad-i-ma'āsh, suyūrghāl, amlāk, aimma,* etc. (and *waqf,* in case the grant was for the benefit of a shrine or school). The total amount of revenues alienated through these grants ranged from nearly 2 per cent to above 5 per cent in different provinces under Akbar. The prime object of these grants was to maintain an "Army of Prayer" namely, the class of Muslim (and sometimes non-Muslim) theologians and scholars, pensioned-off officials, and the women and the idle of respectable families. The grants were usually curtailed at the death of a grantee, the reduced area being distributed among the heirs usually, but not invariably, in accordance with Muslim law. In 1690, however, Aurangzeb declared the grants hereditary. But sale or transfer was always prohibited. It may, therefore, be assumed that the

221. Ibid. pp. 75-76.
222. Cf. M Athar Ali, op. cit., pp. 154-60.

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process of fragmentation of the grants was usually extremely rapid.[223]

The grantees were prohibited from interfering with the rights already existing in the area. The land of the grants, therefore, contained usually two portions: *ra'iyatī*, peasant-held, from which the grantees merely collected the land-revenue, and *khud-kāshta*, the land cultivated by the grantees themselves with the aid of servants or hired labour, or by peasant-tenants. This latter category was probably created by bringing under cultivation the waste-land, which was usually explicitly included in the original area of the grants.[224]

Besides the share in landed property arising out of the appropriation of land-revenue, there existed another right with a history going back to the Turkish conquests and beyond. We have seen in the previous section how during the period of the Delhi Sultanate the various strata of the subjugated rural aristocracy and other superior elements within the villages were tending to merge into a single rural exploiting class. This process was largely completed by the beginning of the Mughal period. The old terms indicating the different elements had by now disappeared and a single designation, *zamīndār* (=*būmī*), had been substituted for them. A number of local names representing a variety of rights were still preserved, but they were almost invariably treated as mere synonyms of the universal term, *zamīndārī* (=*milkiyat*).[225] So broad seems to have been the connotation of this term that autonomous chiefs too were described as *zamīndārs*.[226]

With all its varieties *zamīndārī* may, in essence, be described as a right superior to that of the peasants, and originating, in the main, independently of the existing imperial power. It implied a claim to a share in the produce of the soil which was completely distinct from, although it might be laid side by side with, the

223. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 298-316. The *jāgīrdārs* also conferred grants, but these could only be for the periods of their own assignments, though successive *jāgīrdārs* might tend to confirm the grants of their predecessors (Ibid. pp. 315-16).

224. Ibid. pp. 299-300, 303.

225. Ibid. pp. 138-40

226. Ibid. pp. 182-83

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land-revenue demand. This claim took many forms. It might consist of a cess, levied in kind or cash, on the cultivator; or it might be made up of the difference between the *zamīndār's* actual collection of land revenue from the peasants, and the amount assessed by the state; or it might be compounded by the authorities for a definite share, either out of the land revenue or by allotment of revenue-free land. In the last case, the conventional share of the *zamīndār* was called *mālikāna* and amounted to one-tenth of the revenue in northern India. In Gujarat it amounted to a fourth, the land left revenue-free to the *zamīndār* being called *bāṅṭh*. Besides exercising this right to a share in the produce of the soil, the *zamīndār* also levied a number of other cesses and exacted certain customary perquisites from the peasants under him.[227]

It is obvious that the *zamīndār's* share in the surplus was subordinate to that of the king or his assignee, appropriated in the form of land-revenue. This is also confirmed by the sale-prices of *zamīndārīs*, which, if they are capitalized values of returns expected from the respective *zamīndārī* holdings, show the *zamīndār's* income to have been very substantially smaller than the land-revenue imposed on the area of his holding.[228]

Another factor to be considered while assessing the share of the whole *zamīndār* class in the rural surplus is the extent of the land subject to *zamīndārī* right. It is almost certain that the *zamīndārī* right was to be found in one form or another in every locality, or *pargana*, of the empire.[229] But whether all lands, or all villages, were covered by *zamīndārī* is another matter. In fact, it seems that in most regions there were villages, termed *ra'iyatī*, or peasant-held, which were not subject in any way to a *zamīndār*.[230]

On the other hand on some lands the *zamīndār's* claims appear to have been of much greater magnitude than on other lands. Such were their *khud-kāshta* lands, presumably cultivated

227. Ibid. pp. 144-50.
228. Ibid. pp. 150-53.
229. Ibid. pp. 137-88.
230. Ibid. pp. 141-43. For the contrary view, see N. A. Siddiqi in the *IESHR*, i. no. 3, 73-80.

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by their servants or hired labour. There were other lands, where the peasants appeared simply to have been their tenants-at-will.[231] Sufficient evidence is not available to enable us to say whether the *zamīndārs* could also restrain the peasants from abandoning their lands.[232]

The historical roots of *zamīndārī* were apparent in its close association with caste and clan. *Zamīndārī* holdings of members of the same clan were generally contiguous, lending support to the usual tradition that they had originated from the dominance gained over the territory by the ancestors of that particular clan. Since possession of armed retainers (and still better, a fort) was the hallmark of the right of even a small *zamīndār* this association was further reinforced when the clan supplied him his retainers.

The pattern of *zamīndārī* possession that had been so established was, however, subject to constant alteration under the influence of three factors. First, the application of Hindu and Muslim laws of inheritance to *zamīndārī* led to increasing fragmentation of *zamīndārī* holdings. This gave rise to the traditional mode of division of the *zamīndārī* right in a village, consisting of an initial division into *paṭṭīs*, and of an ultimate one in terms of *biswas* or 1/20ths of the whole.[233]

Secondly, the sale and purchase of *zamīndārī* introduced strangers and altered the sizes of holdings. During the Mughal period the *zamīndārī* right was fully saleable with almost no restraints. This was true of almost all parts of the empire. Purchasers are often found to be of different castes, and also faith, from those of the sellers, so that the caste monopoly of the *zamīndārī* of any locality was quite vulnerable to the inroads of money. It is quite possible that the marketability of *zamīndārī* also encouraged fragmentation, the heirs tending to break up joint-holdings to be able to sell their shares. On the other hand the surviving sale-deeds often show a single purchaser buying from a number of holders, and thus substituting one holding for several.[234]

231. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 141, 143-44.
232. Ibid. p. 144.
233. Ibid. pp. 155-57; also p. 140.
234. See the evidence set out in I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 155-59, 162-63.

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Finally, the emperor claimed the ultimate authority to depose as well as appoint *zamīndārs*. This authority was exercised generally in case of non-payment of revenue or rebellion; but it seems as if sometimes the Mughal emperor might have created *zamīndārs* where none existed before. On the whole imperial action must have resulted in considerable changes in *zamīndārī* possession.[235]

The relationship subsisting between the imperial administration and the *jāgīrdārs* on the one hand and the *zamīndārs* on the other is of very great interest. Inasmuch as the *zamīndārs* formed a powerful local element, the Mughal authorities aimed at using them, as did the Sultans, for the collection of land-revenue from the peasantry. Thus in several cases the land-revenue, though supposedly assessed directly upon the peasants, was paid by the *zamīndār* who actually collected it from them. For this "service" the *zamīndārs* were allowed compensation, *nānkār*, in the form either of a percentage of revenue collected or of a portion of revenue-free lands. The semi-hereditary local official, *chaudharī*, chosen from amongst the *zamīndārs*, was charged with assisting the *jāgīrdārs* and their agents with the collection of revenue, and was compensated for his pains by *nānkār*. By the latter half of the 17th century a particular term, *ta'alluqdār*, arose to designate a *zamīndār* who paid the land-revenue not only on his *zamīndārī* but also on lands outside of it.[236]

At the same time, considerable antagonism between the imperial ruling class and the *zamīndārs* seems to have existed on the score of their respective shares in the surplus produce of the peasantry. With its armed retainers and its local customary ties with the peasants, the *zamīndār* class appeared to the Mughal nobility a subversive element in the whole political structure. Moreover, as the pressure of the land-revenue burden increased, the *zamīndārs* found themselves either unable to collect it or

235. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 179-82. Cf. also B. R. Grover in *IESHR*, i, no. 1, 14-15.

236. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 169-79. S. N. Hasan introduces a useful distinction between such a *zamīndār*, whom he calls "intermediary *zamīndār*" and the ordinary or "primary *zamīndār*" (*IESHR*, i, no. 4, 114ff).

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saw their own share being reduced. By the latter half of the 17th century the relations between them and the Mughal ruling class appear to have reached a point of crisis, which was marked by a series of rural uprisings led by the *zamīndārs*.[237]

We may now consider the nature of the peasant right in the land. It is difficult to speak of the peasantry of Mughal India as a whole, since, as we shall note presently, a considerable degree of stratification prevailed within it. But it does appear that the peasants were in general expected to enjoy security of occupancy. The conversion of peasant-tilled (*ra'iyat-kāshta*) land into "self-cultivated" (*khud-kāshta*) land by officials and grantees was prohibited. That this should be so was quite natural at a time when land was abundant, and men were scarce. But as we have seen, there were certain lands which were cultivated by peasants at the pleasure of their proprietor-*zamīndārs;* so that tenants-at-will were not altogether unknown.[238]

While the peasant was offered a full right of occupancy, the right to abandon it was not as readily conceded to him. Officials were asked to use force in order to make them cultivate the land, and to restrain them from leaving their villages. From 17th-century Gujarat comes more specific evidence of peasants being treated as semi-serfs. We have record of a full-scale expedition being organized to bring numbers of them back when they had fled from the imperial territories proper to the domains of a chief; and we find local officials disputing with each other over the locality to which a peasant migrant was to be returned.[239]

From the relative paucity of references to such restraints it is doubtful whether one could speak of full-fledged serfdom. It would rather seem that restraint on the peasants was an ultimate right resting with the emperor and his assignees, exercised in practice only in exceptional circumstances. Whether the *zamīndārs* on their own possessed this right of restraint is by no means certain.

There has been much speculation about the village community.

237. I. Habīb, op. cit., pp. 333-51.
238. Ibid. pp. 114-15, 117-18.
239. Ibid. pp. 115-17; B. R. Grover in *Proc. Ind. Hist. Cong.* (Delhi Session, 1961), pp. 152-55 (fn).

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Whether we rely upon the records of the Mughal period or early British records, it seems certain that, at least in northern India, communal ownership or cultivation of land was extremely rare. At best, the community was based on a common financial pool to meet the land-revenue demand, the exactions of the officials and headmen, and certain common village expenses. It is probable that the community invariably consisted of men of one caste, which was usually the dominant peasant-caste in the village.[240] Moreover, in a number of villages the headmen appear to have enjoyed a very privileged position, with revenue-free lands of their own. Their office sometimes became so profitable that, like *zamīndārī*, it came to be sold and purchased.[241]

Among the peasants in general considerable economic differentiation appears to have existed. At the one end were the headmen and the upper peasants domineering over the rest; at the other, "the small peasants" (*reza ri'āyā*) who are said to have been sunk in debt for meeting the expenses of cultivation and for obtaining their seed and cattle.[242] It is unlikely that this differentiation arose out of mere fragmentation of peasant-holdings. While a local scarcity of land might have led to the formation of a category of peasants such as *pā'īkāsht* (tilling in a village other than their own),[243] so long as land as a whole was abundant, such cases could only have been exceptions. Indeed, except for one semi-rhetorical reference in Khafi Khān[244] there is no evidence that peasant-holdings had yet become saleable.

It is likely that the economic differentiation within the peasantry was inherited partly from the past, and had been reinforced or consolidated by the caste system. But the increased pressure of revenue demand, by pauperizing certain weaker or more vulnerable sections of the peasantry more than others, must have increased it further. Cultivation for the market, which seems to have been spreading partly under the pressure of

240. I. Habīb, op. cit., pp. 122-29.
241. Ibid. pp. 129-34.
242. Ibid. p. 120.
243. Cf. B. R. Grover, *IESHR*, i, no. 1, 5.
244. *Muntakhab-ul Luabāb*, Bib. Ind. i, 157-58.

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revenue collection in cash, could also have had the same effect.

The basic line of division among the working people of the countryside was, however, between the peasants and the landless. This line was set socially by the caste system which prevented by compulsion the "menial" castes (such as *chamārs* or *begāris, dhānuks, thoris* or *balāhars*) from tilling the soil on their own. Besides following their prescribed professions, leatherwork, scavenging, etc., they formed a rural reserve force for work on the fields of *zamīndārs* and peasants. There is evidence to show that peasants used hired labour at harvest times; and the existence of such a large rural proletariat was in fact one of the pillars of peasant-farming.[245]

Although the Mughal empire offered greater stability than its predecessors, there appear to have developed within it a number of contradictions arising out of its system of property-relationships. The transfer of *jāgīrs* and the complete alienation of the *jāgīrdārs* from all local ties encouraged an excessive exploitation of the peasantry and a mounting pressure on the *zamīndārs*. This led ultimately to peasant uprisings (e.g. Jats, Sikhs, Satnāmīs) whose leadership was assumed at one stage or another by *zamīndārs;* or the peasants served as cannon-fodder in revolts of *zamīndārs* themselves (e.g. Marathas). Naturally, other explanations have also been put forward for these revolts; but it is quite possible that, more than anything else, the social contradictions were the real source of the political crisis of the Mughal empire.[246]

The states that arose on the ruins of the Mughal empire could not create any new social structure. Wherever the *zamīndār*-leaders of the Marathas or Jats were successful, they not only sought to overthrow Mughal *jāgīrdārs,* but also replaced other *zamīndārs* by themselves, thus combining in one the roles of

245. Ibid. pp. 120-22; *IESHR*, i, no. 3, 66. Cf. D. Kumar in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, iv, no. 3, 337-63.

246. I. Habib, op. cit., pp. 316-51. The other principal explanations are the rise of Hindu reaction (put forward most cogently by J. N. Sarkar), and the rise of nationalities (which is espoused, if I am not mistaken, by some Soviet scholars). For a plea that my own views should be regarded as "strictly tentative", see M. Athar Ali, op. cit., pp. 89-92.

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rulers and *zamīndārs*.[247] Elsewhere, revenue-farmers aspired to acquire a hereditary status by claiming the position of *zamīndārs*.[248] When the British regime began, the *zamīndārs*, whether new or old, appear to have been exercising greater authority than under the Mughals. But, essentially, the British found the Mughal system still surviving. The pivot of this was the large revenue demand, "the property (vested in government by immemorial usage) of 10/11 of the net rental of the country."[249] Initially the British government found itself in the same relationship of co-operation and antagonism with the *zamīndārs* as had the Mughal government. But it was immensely more powerful than its predecessor; and the change in the economic context following the "drain of wealth" to England and then the impact of the Industrial Revolution altered the whole nature of the relationship between the British government and the *zamīndārs*, as well as that between the *zamīndārs* and the peasantry.

247. For Marathas seizing big as well as petty *zamīndārs*, see Azad Bilgrami, *Khizāna-i-'Āmira* (Kanpur, 1871), p. 47. For the expansion of the Jat *zamīndārī* in middle Doab, see I. Habib, op. cit., p. 341.

248. Cf. Moreland, *The Agrarian System of Moslem India*, pp. 172-75.

249. Holt Mackenzie, Minute of 1 July, 1819, *Selections from the Revenue Records of the North-West Provinces, 1818-20* (Calcutta, 1869), p. 62 fn.

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A Study in State-Formation among Tribal Communities[1]

K. Suresh Singh

The process of integration of the tribes with the larger Indian community is explained in terms of "Sanskritization", tribal-peasant (or caste) continuum and formation of states among the tribal communities. An interaction of all the three processes is brought out by different stages of development of the tribes in the "exposed" central zone of tribal India.

Following the eclipse of the Gupta empire, the wide eastern tract extending from the Himalayan foothills to the Vindhya mountains (Kaimur range) witnessed the emergence of the rural foci of political power, led by autochthonous chieftains who acted as champions of neo-brāhmanism. Such communities as Doms, Bhars and Cheros in south Bihar, Kharwars in the Sone-Damodar valley, Gonds and Rakshels in the Chhattisgarh region and the

1. Based on the author's incomplete manuscript: "Cheros: A Dynamic Study". The references to Cheros are extracted from this study; to Bhumij from Surajit Sinha, "State Formation and Rajput Myth in Central India" (*Man in India*, xlii, no. 2, 1961); to Gonds from C. V. F. Haimendorf, *Raj Gonds of Adilabad* (Macmillan & Co., London, 1948); to Ahoms from E. A. Gait, *History of Assam* (Revised by Barua and Murthy, Calcutta, 1963) except where otherwise indicated, Surajit Sinha in his article has built up an interesting conceptual framework for such studies. However, some of the facts culled from secondary sources are open to question in the light of the findings of current historical research, which does not substantiate the theoretical framework of Sinha in several cases.

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Bhumij in the jungle *maḥāls* of Bengal filled the vacuum in the countryside in the medieval period. The Doms[2] founded kingdoms at the Himalayan foothills; in the 13th century one of their princes ruled at Ayodhya. The Bhars occupied a large area extending from Bundelkhand and Sagar to the eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh[3] and Bihar as far as Bhagalpur and Tirhut. Numerous place-names associated with these tribes indicate their widespread influence in the region. The ruins of their forts and tanks *(sūryabhedī)* are scattered far and wide, and their legends and folklore point probably to their first experiment with state formation. At first they were a "God-neglecting and caste-disregarding"[4] race who wiped out centres of brāhmaṇism and violated brāhmaṇa girls with the result that these girls became *sati* and the presiding deities at the fairs still held in this region.[5] But after a period of initial resistance to brāhmaṇism they became Hinduized and emerged as its enthusiastic champions. They were elevated to the ranks of the kṣatriyas. The acculturated groups were now called Raj Gonds, Raj Bhars, and Chyavanabansi Cheros (Cheros descended from *ṛṣi* Cyavana). To the following period may also be assigned the beginning of the Hinduization of the tribes living in Jharkhand or Chotanagpur and also of the Mongoloid Tharus.[6] The emergence of autochthons as kingdom-builders and agents of culture-change is climaxed and illustrated by the formation of states among the Mongoloid Ahoms in upper Assam[7] (1228-1819), by the Gonds in central India[8] (15th-18th centuries), by the Nagbansis in Chotanagpur[9] and by the Cheros in south Bihar (Shahabad and Palamau). The present paper deals with the Cheros in some

2. Lala Sitaram, *Ayodhyā Kā Itihās* (in Hindi), pp. 54-58.

3. Baden-Powell, "The Population of the Ganges Plain", *The Indian Village Community* (London, 1896), pp. 105-10.

4. P. Carnegy, "The Bhars of Oudh and Benaras", *JASB* (1876), pp. 297-98.

5. Suresh Singh, op. cit. These fairs are held at Dumraon and Barhampur.

6. S. K. Srivastav, *Tharus: A Study in Culture Dynamics*, pp. 15-17.

7. E. A. Gait, op. cit.

8. Furer-Haimendorf, op. cit.

9. R. D. Haldar, "An Abstract of the Annals of the Nagbansi Raj Family of Chotanagpur" (*Man in India*, vii, 1928).

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depth and seeks to generalize the process in a wider frame of reference.

The history of state formation among the Cheros cannot in its early stages be based solely on the indigenous source-materials, which consist of the highly brāhmaṇized accounts of the origin and growth of the Chero power. The monuments and mounds scattered in the eastern region traditionally associated with them may shed light on their material culture, but these are yet to be excavated. So are the massive ruins in Chotanagpur of the temples which represent early centres of Hindu influence in the region. Medieval chronicles revel in accounts of the invasions of Palamau; there is little else in them. Some inscriptions and *farmāns* (imperial regulations) yield important information on the extent of acculturation and the feudal organization under the later Cheros. The earliest British accounts of the land system and *jāgīrdārīs* in the latter half of the 18th century, towards the end of the Chero kingdom, help to unravel and analyse the different strands of the process of state formation. This exercise has to be supplemented by a study of the existing social structure of the Cheros, their village organization and economic system, which bear, despite the cataclysmic changes of the modern and recent periods, the marks of state formation.

The term *chero* is derived from the word *chera,* a snake, and the Cheros claim descent from the historical Dravidian Nagas, who were a considerable power in central and eastern India.[10] According to their legends, they migrated from western India along the Himalayan foothills (Morung), swung to the south along the Gandak river and spread over the adjoining regions.[11] The Cehopadas are mentioned in the *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*[12] along with the tribes which disregarded Vedic sacrifices. From the Gandak region the Cheros and other tribes migrated south-

10. T. V. Mahalingam, "The Nagas in Indian History and Culture", *Journal of Indian History,* xliii, Pt. I (April 1965), 1-71.

11. The survival of the settlements of the Cheros on both banks of the Gandak river and in eastern UP and western Bihar in close proximity to those of the other allied Dravidian tribes such as Bhars and Suirs is a fact recorded in the Gazetteers of the districts of the region.

12. Suresh Singh, op. cit.

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ward and founded their settlements in the Kāruṣa territory (now known as Shahabad) and along the Sone river as far as modern Patna, and for some centuries they remained locked up in inter-tribal warfare.[13] The fertile land mass, availability of iron in the Kaimur hill ranges and contact with new forces in the cradle of Aryan culture and brāhmaṇical Hinduism considerably contributed to their transformation into agricultural communities. The legend preserved by the Oraons mentions their settlement as "agriculturists and landowners" in the Kāruṣa region.[14] The process was facilitated by an extension of the knowledge of agricultural seasons (*nakṣatras*) and of agricultural implements and practices carried by migrating Hinduized communities into Jharkhand, which is in progress even today. Closely connected with this development was the spread of brāhmaṇical Hinduism into the tribal belt, attested by the discovery of temples on the periphery and in the heart of the region.[15] The grant of lands to brāhmaṇas in tribal areas, from the Gupta period onwards, as part of emerging feudal system, which involved not only "transfer of all sources of revenue" but also "surrender of police and administrative functions"[16] helped this process and led, as the subsequent influx of brāhmaṇas showed, to colonization and the extension of agriculture.[17]

From about the 12th century the Cheros were an established rural power, "masters of the Gangetic Plains". A Chero chief killed the defiant son of a Sufi saint in southern Muzaffarpur.[18] Four Chero kingdoms sprang into existence in Shahabad. They collected one-fourth of the crop produce and one-eighth

13. Ibid.

14. S. C. Roy, *The Oraons of Chotanagpur* (Calcutta, 1915), pp. 27-29.

15. D. P. Patil, *Antiquarian Remains in Bihar*. The temple remains at Majhion (Ranchi) and Deogaon (Palamau) are significant.

16. R. S. Sharma, *Indian Feudalism* (Calcutta University, 1965). We have no information whether the temples and monasteries in Palamau—and there are extensive ruins of these—belonged to any land-owning establishment. The Nalanda seal mentions that some five villages in Palamau were earmarked for the maintenance of the Nalanda University (Patil, op. cit., pp. 349-54).

17. Sharma, op. cit., p. 41.

18. S. H. Askari, "A Shuttari Saint of North Bihar", *JBRS* (March-June 1951), pp. 75-76.

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of the forest produce, including *mahuā* flower.[19] They adopted Hindu and Buddhist images, worshipped them and also their traditional deity, *devī*. They claimed descent from Cyavana *ṛṣi*, which indicates their brāhmaṇization. When Buchanan visited the Cheros in 1812, he found them "eat with Rajputs and wear thread".[20] The migration and thrust of the Ujjainia Rajputs into the fertile Gangetic belt from Buxar to Bihia brought them face to face with the Cheros. The confrontation between the two passed through two important phases, from 1333 to 1484 and from 1584 to 1611. The Cheros also came into conflict with Shershah and Malik Bay.[21] Ultimately the Chero rulers rallied their peoples in a last-ditch battle with the migrant Rajputs in 1611, but they were completely routed. When their power in Shahabad was destroyed, they migrated to Palamau, as some of them had probably done earlier. This migration marked yet another phase in their state formation.

A scion of the Chainpur line of the Chero chiefs of Shahabad, Raja Bhagwant Rai, overthrew in or about 1572 the ruling Rakshel chiefs who belonged to a Hinduized tribe and were joined by the Surwar tribe (the ancestors of the present Rajput Thakurais). But it was not just the conquest by a minority; the seven clans of the Cheros (*bārah hazārīs*), who subsequently founded their villages in Palamau, and the Kharwars (*athārah hazārī*) participated in the conquest. Palamau was not a *terra incognita* at the time of the conquest. The Mars, another tribe, had introduced and extended agriculture by constructing water reservoirs and founded settlements in the area in which flourished the centres of Buddhism and Hinduism.

Bhagwant Rai was succeeded by Anant Rai, whose reign witnessed two punitive invasions by the Mughal armies. Then came the Golden Age of the Chero rule under Medini Rai (1620-34), who not only extended the frontiers of the kingdom in all directions but also encouraged cultivation, improved irrigation facilities, settled tribals such as the Parahiyas and founded villages. During his reign "there was no house with-

19. *Ta'rīkh-i-Ujjainia*, ii (hereafter mentioned as *TU*), 4.
20. C. E. A. W. Oldham, *Journey of Francis Buchanan*, pp. 1-4.
21. Suresh Singh, *op. cit.*

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out a churner, without butter". He built a military fort near Daltonganj, the inscription wherein praises him as "effulgent like the moon on earth, equal to Indra, of renowned glory", etc.

Then followed three successive invasions by the Mughal armies in 1641-42, 1643 and 1660; the last invasion led to the conquest and annexation of the Chero kingdom, to the reduction of the status of Chero rajas to that of *jāgīrdārs* of the Mughal empire, and to the creation of some *jāgīrs* independent of the Chero rulers. The Chero kingdom was further undermined by three successive invasions in 1720, 1730 and 1734 by internecine feuds between the Rajput Thakurais on the one hand and the Chero rajas on the other, and by a civil war which ravaged the country till the British appeared on the scene.

The British were not slow to recognize the strategic significance of the territory, of its forts and passes, against the Marathas from Nagpur (central India); important trade routes to central India and Uttar Pradesh lay through this region. The *casus belli* was provided by the need to protect the Chero raja Gopal Rai's interest against another Chero pretender, Jainath, supported by the Thakurais. The British forces marched into Palamau and captured the two forts in February-March 1771. There followed a brief civil war between the two parties (April-September 1772) at the end of which Jainath's supporters were put to rout. The following 40 years of confusion sapped the foundation of the Chero raj; the Thakurais built up their power particularly during 1783-86 under the Thakurai manager, Shiva Prasad Singh, who commenced the policy of commuting a portion of the rent payable by under-tenure holders to the raja in return for a lump sum, which reduced the raja's annual assets and revenue. The indiscriminate grant of *jāgīrs* through *farmāns* by the later Chero rajas cut into the source of revenue; the emergence of powerful southern Chero *jāgīrdārs* was registered at the expense of their kingdom. The financial bankruptcy of the kingdom was complete when Churaman Rai, the last raja, had to incur heavy expenditure in the Surguja expeditions. The *jāgīrdārs* did not pay the revenue fully with the

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result that the Chero ruler could not pay off the government revenue, and this led to the sale of the kingdom in 1815.

The territory once ruled by the Cheros was handed over to the Rajput raja Ghanshyam Singh of Deo situated in the adjoining areas of Gaya. Numerous tenures of the Palamau *jāgīrdārs,* mostly small, were sold for arrears of revenue. This led to the uprising of Palamau *jāgīrdārs,* both Chero and native Rajputs, against the authorities in 1817; this was also an expression of the Cheros' pride which had been hurt at the fall of their rai The territory passed under the direct administration of the Company.

The uprising of 1832 was more broadbased; the landlords and their *ra'iyats,* Chero and Kharwar *jāgīrdārs,* rose against the Company, partly because the steep increase in revenue demand had hit them hard and partly because the property of *jāgīrdārs* and under-tenure holders had been sold for arrears of revenue. A striking feature of the revolt was that Raja Ram Bahadur, the last representative of the former Chero raj, marched against his own people and fought bravely, even though deserted by his tribal followers: this illustrated the measure of alienation of the ruling family from the people. There was yet another aspect of the movement. Unlike the revolts of 1801 and 1817, it was also directed against the non-tribals who suffered and were killed on a large scale. The 1857 Mutiny was also an expression of the tribals' animosity towards the Rajput Thakurais. These successive uprisings, directed not only against the established authority but also against the non-tribals and those who had conspired against and destroyed the Chero kingdom, reflected an agrarian and political reality. The Cheros had been irretrievably replaced by the non-tribals, both indigenous and migrant, as dominant interests in the region. This fact was brought out more unmistakably in 1895. The significance of some of these movements lay in the fact that they were fountain-springs of the later Chero revivalism, of which such Chero leaders as Jitu Singh (hero of 1817 uprising) came to be regarded as culture heroes.

The Cheros did not depend on "pillage and brigandage" for building up their kingdom and keeping it going for well over

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two hundred years. Their two surviving magnificent forts (the later one is a fine piece of architecture) and their tributes to the Mughal emperor speak of a high stage of development and acculturation. They encouraged cultivation and settlements, particularly in the Oranga-Amanat valley which they opened up. Extension of cultivation and foundation of settlements were the two conditions laid down in the *sanads* granted by them. They constructed reservoirs (*āhars*) and were particularly good at constructing wells of large diameter and cylindrical shape, including underground wells (*baulīs*), which still survive. The early accounts of Palamau in 1875 describe rich and fertile *tappās*, which constituted the main source of agricultural income mopped up by the Chero princes. As in Shahabad, they levied taxes at the rate of one-fourth of the crop produce and one-eighth of the forest produce. Moreover, the yields from *khās* villages (and these were largely intact under the Chero rulers till 1660) must have been substantial. There were also a levy of a few *cowries* (Chero currency and medium of exchange) on every village, the customary *mudud* (assistance) from the *jāgīrdārs* and imposition of *abwābs* (miscellaneous dues) of various kinds. The Cheros also started *hāts* and fairs, some of which may have developed from tribal matrix. In any case these served as outlets for such products as cotton from the territories extending as far as Surguja and Mirzapur. The existence of a Chero township and of large colonies of traders and merchants points to significant commercial activities.

The immensely larger area of uplands vis-à-vis paddy lands (4 : 1 in Palamau) determined the character of land tenure, *pariādārī*. It was based on an assessment of rice-lands and the better part of the upland, the cultivators being free to cultivate without payment as much inferior upland as they chose; they were also entitled to a share in the forest produce such as *mahuā* without further payment. The *pariā* was divided into *pāwā*. These tenures formed the basis of the organization of the village, *khuntkaṭṭi* (founded by clearers of the forest) or *khās* (in possession of the raja). On this village system was imposed a feudal superstructure in the form of *jāgīrs* and *ijāras*, and a web of rent and predial conditions. Most villages founded

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by the migrant Cheros were organized around clans, though later they tended to become heterogeneous.

There is no evidence of grants of *jāgīrs* by the early Chero rulers up to 1685, which may lead one to infer that almost the entire Chero territory was probably administered as *khās*. From 1680 onwards under conditions of confusion and disintegration grants of *jāgīrs* progressively went up; the last Chero ruler (1784-1813) made as many as 37 grants of *jāgīrs*. The *sanads* composed in Magahi dialect, which was the court language, opened with a salutation to Kālanāth,[22] to Lakshman Balajī or Balajī Lakshman and to Rāmjī. The *mahārājas* were mentioned as "endowed with great glory (*prabal pratāp sampanna*), of rising glory (*udit pratāp*), beloved of gods (*devadevanam*), etc., and the *sanads* were duly stamped with the royal seal.[23] In 1823 it was reported that the largest number of *jāgīrs* related to military service and were given to Cherowan and Kharwar Bhogtas (1,022½ villages), followed by other service *jāgīrs* (446¾) and maintenance grants to relations (*babuāns*, 58 villages). All these records of title purport to everything that grows in the area such as trees and fruits (*gāch*), fisheries (*māch*), produce of water (*jalkar*) and forest produce (*bankar*) in all directions. The grants are hereditary in some cases, though not in others. The rule of primogeniture and the right to resume *jāgīrs* on the death of male heirs are recognized. Another condition is the extension of cultivation, directly or indirectly, and rural settlement. There are in addition *ijāra* tenures (lease or grant of *khās* villages), about 85 or 88 of them, and a large number of rent-free (*minhāi*) *jāgīrs*. A copperplate grant (bearing Saṃvat 1753) mentions confirmation of the sale of two villages to two Panre brothers for a conside-

22. Kālanāth was the disciple of Chetnāth, founder of the Naga cult and the ashram at Chandihar in Balia district; he became the preceptor of the families of Chero rulers and also Nagbansis in the 18th century.

23. The first complete record of these *jāgīrs* is available in 1283, i.e. 14 years after the fall of the dynasty when considerable erosion and disintegration of the Chero authority had taken place, and these too related only to Palamau pargana which was only a part of the Chero raj. The extant 200 *sanads* constitute only one-third of the total number of existing tenures.

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ration of Rs. 601. The *jāgīrdārs*, who were also called upon to render services, paid exceedingly small revenue in addition to large sums of *mudud* and *abwab* which were not mentioned in the *sanads*.

Repeated invasions of their territories and the compulsion to expand their kingdom led the Cheros to develop a sophisticated military machine. The remarkable contemporary painting showing Daud Khan's capture of Palamau fort (1661) throws light on their strategic fortification and troop formation. The old fort was a bustling town, with a street dividing two rows of shops and town dwellers' residences. The Chero cavalry under Palamau *kunwars* (scions of the ruling family) was armed with spears and shields, "a very respectable body, as well mounted as their foes", though diffident and purposelessly deployed. The Chero soldiery was a mixed group. It comprised a number of fair-complexioned and well dressed men showing that "in those days there was a considerable sprinkling of Aryans among the Palamau population". These could as well be mercenaries or Thakurais' men. But the bulk of the army was formed by the Cheros and Kharwar soldiers, "black, with only a loin cloth, bare heads and bare feet, bows with only one curve and plenty of arrows, besides which some had spears and some swords and shields". Both old and new forts were equipped with cannon. The latter was crowned with a big cannon (*dum dum*), though "the proportion of matchlock men to bowmen is small". The archers were recruited from every Chero and Kharwar family; in addition, the *jāgīrdārs* helped with contingents of soldiers recruited or maintained by them.

The Chero territorial administrative divisions formed a four-tier system. At the apex came the pargana which was divided into *tappās*, the large territorial units at one time common to the regions comprising Shahabad and Palamau. Palamau pargana was divided into 22 *tappās*, each complete with its presiding deity and markets, but varying in cultivable area, population and number of villages. There is no evidence to establish that these *tappās* formed individual proprietary estates, though much later these were amalgamated to form police stations, the

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units of police and revenue administration. Within or cutting across *tappās* were *lāts,* and there were 12 of them, given to a clan of the Cherowans each in recognition of its military service by the later Chero rajas. The *lāts* were located at Rabda (clan Sawant), Betla (Sawant), Manasoti (Kunwar), Kurka (Mowar), Obra (Mowar), Lidki (Kunwar), Sildilia (Sawant), Khajuri (Sawant), Sua (Rautia), Chando (Mowar) and Mankeri (Mowar and Kunwar). Each *lāt* consisted of several villages, and each village was broken up into *chatāis* (hamlets).

The Cheros established almost complete social equation with other tribes. This is illustrated by the ease with which all the major tribes, Cheros, Kharwars and Rakshels, were absorbed into the Parahiyas' nature-spirit framework. Three Parahiya female deities were married to the male spirits of Rakshels, Kharwars and Chero tribes, each being assigned a region. The Parahiyas were treated well; their customary rights were recognized; they were required to contribute only broomstick and leaf-plates by way of tribute in return for their settlement in western and eastern regions. The Kharwars were granted *jāgīrs* and formed a part of the Chero soldiery.

The phenomenon of state-formation among the tribal communities in India occurs particularly among the Dravidian tribes in the exposed central region and the Mongoloid Ahoms in Assam. The Kolarian tribes such as the Mundas in Ranchi (not the Bhumij, though they belonged to the same stock) with their communal agrarian organization borne out by their *khuntkaṭṭi* villages show little propensity towards the development of state. The view held by some that the Chotanagpur raj arose from the Munda culture matrix is bad history and poor ethnography. The Chotanagpur Nagbansi chiefs were the descendants of the historical Dravidian Nagas who ruled at Bastar as late as the 14th century.[24] Other Dravidian tribes which witnessed the rise of states, apart from the Doms and the

24. Mahalingam, op. cit. E. T. Dalton mentions surviving colonies of Nagbansis in Jashpur which point to the probable route of migration of this tribe into Chotanagpur (*Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal,* Calcutta, 1872, pp. 131-32).

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Bhars, were Kharwars in the Sone-Damodar valley[25] and the Gonds of Garha Mandla, Deoghar and Chanda. The Bhumijs no doubt form probably a solitary exception among the Kolarian groups,[26] but some of the Kolarian institutions such as *parhās* have to be investigated to find out whether they contain any Dravidian element.[27]

There were four preconditions for the formation of states among these communities. Settled agriculture and correspondingly organized tribal village community was one. The extension of cultivation through a network of irrigation schemes was necessary for building and sustaining states. The irrigated rice cultivation of some advanced sections of the Kachari tribe[28] led to early state formation in Assam. The migration of Ahoms[29] to Assam from the east in the 13th century and the subsequent expansion of their rule positively encouraged the extension of *sāli* (wet land) cultivation and new transplantation techniques. They also built up with communal labour a system of massive dykes and embankments, unparalleled elsewhere. Lands were improved, and *āhu* (upland) and *bāo* (broadcast rice) lands were made suitable for the *sāli* crop in upper Assam, the cradle and core of the Ahom culture. There is also a variety of high-yielding Ahom seed, one of the dozens of *sāli* varieties.[30] The Gond rajas also reclaimed wild forests and adorned their kingdoms with embankments and other irrigation schemes, "admir-

25. Pratap Dhawal Deo is a Kharwar feudatory of Gāhaḍavāl kings. Kharwar Rajputs migrated from Palamau to Jashpur (Madhya Pradesh) and founded a raj there. The Ramgarh Kharwar Rajput family founded a kingdom in the Damodar valley (See W. W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, London, 1877, Hazaribagh and Lohardega, pp. 206, 117-19).

26. Surajit Sinha, op. cit.

27. *Paṭṭīs* rather than *parhās* appear to be the original Kolarian institutions in the Munda region of Ranchi district; the *parhā* institution at Torpa (Ranchi) has been thoroughly Hinduized: the *parhā* raja has become a mahārāja. The interaction of the Oraons and the Mundas at Torpa deserves to be studied in depth.

28. A. Guha, "Ahom Migration: Its Impact on Rice Economy of Medieval Assam", *Artha Vijñāna*, ix, no. 2 (June 1967), 145.

29. Ibid. pp. 139-40.

30. Ibid. pp. 150-53.

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able works of engineering skill", and thus kept a "well-governed and contented kingdom".[31]

A second condition was acculturation. The long network of temples, bearing the imprint of Orissa architecture in the Bhumij region and extending to Panchpargana in Ranchi district in Chotanagpur, and the penetration of Kurmi peasantry from Bengal, explain the Hinduization of Bhumij and other tribal masses long before the Bhumij kingdoms had taken shape.[32] The same is true of Assam, the seat of tantric Hinduism before the advent of the Ahoms.[33] The Gond territory of Andhra and Madhya Pradesh had been penetrated by Buddhist and Hindu influences.[34] The penetration of brāhmaṇism into the Sone valley is as old as the Tarachandi Rock inscription of the Kharwar chief, Pratāpadhavala Deva (V.S. 1225), who warned the people against forging land grants. The brāhmaṇical influence was also facilitated by land grants to the brāhmaṇas, which led to the extension of cultivation and rural settlement in eastern India, Orissa[35] and south Bihar.

A third factor was the role of a determined acculturated powerful tribal minority which tried to foist its rule on its people or on a new territory. The emergence of the Nagbansis as the head of the *parhā* confederacy, which ultimately developed into a kingdom, is an instance in point.[36] The Ahom ruler Sukapa (1228-68) with the following of eight nobles subjugated the Nagas and laid the foundation of the kingdom;[37] so did the Cheros in Palamau. The Gond rulers of Garha Mandala probably imitated the Rajput princes who were established in Madhya Pradesh from the seventh century onwards.[38] The establishment of a minority rule in tribal communities should be distinguished from the imposition of the migrant Rajputs' rule on tribes in some hilly tracts of Orissa, Chhattisgarh and

31. Quoted by Furer-Haimendorf, op. cit.
32. Surajit Sinha, op. cit.
33. Gait, op. cit., chap. IV.
34. Furer-Haimendorf, op. cit., pp. 6-12.
35. R. S. Sharma, op cit., pp. 274-75, 285.
36. Haldar, op. cit.
37. Gait, op. cit., p. 79.
38. Furer-Haimendorf, op. cit.

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south Bihar, which represented varying degrees of social equation with subjugated tribes, which were in some cases kept in good humour by being associated with the coronation ceremony.[39] Where there was no such imposition by an immigrant group, tribal or non-tribal, internal developments led to a "constructive coagulation of traditional socio-political units" into a state, as happened among the Bhumij.[40]

Fourthly, once these states had come into being, they were subjected to a spate of invasions from outside, which together with their own urge for expansion put a strain on their resources, feudalized their structure, weakened them and hastened their end. The Ahoms were locked in perpetual hostilities with the Kacharis, the Kochs, the Daflas and the Chutiyas;[41] they were engaged and invaded by Muslim armies from Bengal from 1615 to Mir Jumla's expeditions against them in 1662-63, which resulted in their subjugation to the Mughal empire. The creation of such gubernatorial posts as Bar Phukan and Bar Barua followed.[42] The Mughals conquered lower Assam in 1658. The Gond dynasty of Garha was attacked and conquered by Asaf Khan in 1564, but it survived till the Marathas brought it to an end in 1780,[43] the kingdom of Charda having fallen in 1749. The feudalization of the Chero political structure after 1660 is proved by an indiscriminate grant of *jāgīrs* under the later Chero rulers.

The imposition of a feudal superstructure resulted in the break-up of a tribe into distinct social categories. The Cheros separated into two groups, the *bārah hazārīs* and the *terah-hazārīs* or *bīrhandhias*. The first, the élite, was a typical creation of the processes of state formation in Palamau to be found in villages around the seat of Chero power, the Palamau fort; it is not found elsewhere among the Cheros. The second group was "unclean", formed by the "illegitimate offspring of the

39. E. T. Dalton, op. cit., p. 142. The Bhuiyas assert that the Raja (of Keonjhar, a Bhanj Deo) is "of their creation, and that the prerogative of installing every new Raja on his accession is their and their alone".

40. Surajit Sinha, op. cit.

41. Gait, op. cit., chapters V-VI.

42. Ibid. p. 112.

43. Furer-Haimendorf, op. cit.

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first", occupying within the *bārah hazārī* social framework or ordinary primitive Chero tribal community the lowest rung of the social and economic ladder. Within the first there are three distinct sections. The first section comprises the *babuāns,* who are scions of the ruling families (of Nawa Jaipur, Bishrampur, Nawagarh, etc.), fully acculturated, inter-marrying with the Rajputs and once in possession of large *jāgīrs* comprising more than a hundred villages. Once known as powerful southern Chero *jāgīrdārs,* these *babuāns,* builders of temples and shrines, deny indignantly their being Cheros, except when they have to seek votes during election and stipends for education of their wards for which only "tribals" are eligible. Over the years their "marriage zones" have widened. The second section consists of the *Cherwans,* that is, the Chero soldiery who occupy the intermediate level. They are *jāgīrdārs* holding villages ranging from a *lāt* or a cluster of 12 villages to one village. They inter-marry among themselves, but have been thoroughly brāhmaṇized. The third group consists of "ordinary Chero" peasantry spread over a hundred villages which is partly brāhmaṇized and still a part of the tribal nature-spirit complex. The more the distance from the culture complex of Palamau, the less the Hinduization. The Cheros on the periphery of the district or in Mirzapur are much less brāhmaṇized.

The aristocratic stratum in egalitarian tribal communities survived and hardened even when the political role of tribal states had been played out. The Bhumij also had a threefold or fourfold social stratification based on corresponding "distribution of power and economic interest in land",[44] and defined in terms of "ritual status". The Ahoms had seven powerful clans (*satghariā*)[45] at the apex of their society.

The manufacture of a spurious genealogy involving the conferment of the status of kṣatriya is an important indication of the brāhmaṇization of the tribes. There are two versions of the origin of the Cheros, both representing the widening social distance of the ruling group from its mores and its people. The first version, fairly well known, speaks of a Rajput raja

44. Surajit Sinha, op. cit.
45. Gait, op. cit., pp. 257-58.

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of Bundelkhand who was blessed with only one daughter. The brāhmaṇa astrologer in the court prophesied that she would marry a *muni* (a mendicant); and so she did in the Morung country. The offspring of Cyavana *ṛṣi* and the king's daughter were the Cheros, Cyavanvanśī Rajputs (children of the moon), and there began a long line of rajas who moved from Morung to Kumaon, from Kumaon to Shahabad.[46] This legend was widespread in Shahabad when Buchanan visited the region in 1812. The second, a later version, emphasizes the more legitimate and pure kṣatriya origin of the Cheros rather than the Rajput one, because they rebelled against the latter.[47] What is further interesting, even the kayastha and Rajput families, anxious to establish their association with and to prove their loyalty to the Cheros (obviously to protect their *jāgīrs* in later times), built up and furnished to the government an equally spurious, brāhmaṇical version of their own origin and migration with the Cheros from Morung to Shahabad and Palamau.[48]

The rulers accelerated the reclamation and cultivation of lands through the construction of embankments and reservoirs which yielded the agricultural surplus necessary to support the governmental machinery. The land in *khās* or *khālisa* villages was cultivated through free plough and labour, and the rulers devised a set of *abwābs* which were commuted in tribal areas only a few decades ago. The system of *abwābs* prevailing in Chotanagpur estate[49] in later times, from the raja down to his *jāgīrdārs*, by and large represented such survival. There were 21 varieties. Some of these were : *dasai* (a contribution at the time of the dussehra festival), *bhattā* (expenses of the landlord visiting a village); *neg* (customary payment on social occasions); *nawa kharnī* (contribution of rice on an auspicious day); *bhandārī dhām* (contribution to landlord's local agent or store house for the support of village shrine); *mahuā behrī* (contri-

46. L. R. Forbes, *Report on the Ryotwari Settlement of the Government farms in Palamau*, pp. 28-29.

47. The second version of the origin prevails in Bishrampur family.

48. See for instance the genealogies of these families maintained in the Record Room, Daltonganj (Palamau).

49. J. Reid, *Final Report on Survey and Settlement Operations in the Ranchi District 1902-10* (Government Printing Press, Patna, 1926).

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bution for extraction of *mahuā* flower); *kathar behrī* (contribution for using jack fruits); *brāhmaṇà niskar* (payment to brāhmaṇas at religious festivals); free plough or exaction of the best oxen from the villages, *begārī* or free labour in the *khas* village comprising three days' ploughing, three days' digging, three days' planting or sowing, three days' cutting, one day's thrashing, one day's storing of grain and one or two days' carrying *jāgīrdār's* or landlord's burdens on his journey.

The formation of the state gave a fillip to commercial activities in fort-cities and encouraged artisans and traders. Trade routes were explored and developed. A trade route from Chanda through Chinnoor and Paloncha to Rajahmundry lay through the Gond territories. The Cheros controlled the route to Madhya Pradesh. They also helped the development of tribal *hāts* and fairs.

There developed an administrative system with the raja at the top and a line of communications extending through a chain of forts (*garh*) under *jāgīrdārs* or rajas' own men. The Ahoms[50] developed a powerful army and navy and built numerous strongholds, as did also the Gonds and the Cheros. The Ahoms perfected the technique of guerilla warfare, and introduced and conducted the census of their population to ensure the stability of their state. They were thus able to gauge their military strength and economic resources and to keep a watch on population, both indigenous and foreign. It will not be correct to assume that a centralized and bureaucratic machinery was imposed cutting across the principle of sub-infeudation in the Gond kingdoms of Garha and Chanda.[51] In fact, the set-up at the top was never fully centralized; the Ahom kings, with a few exceptions, always shared their power with the councillors of the state (*gohains*), just as the Cheros, for all the proclaimed divinity of their rulers, did with the *jāgīrdārs*. The autonomous character of territorial divisions and social institutions remained intact under the Cheros. The introduction of the Rajput polity into tribal areas led to the "imposition of clan aristocracies on

50. Gait, op. cit., chapter IX.
51. Quoted by S. Sinha, op. cit.

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old and settled villages".[52] The practice of apportionment of villages in units of 12 and 84 was noticed in Gujarat and in a ninth-century Cālukya inscription. The practice seemed to be common all over tribal India, and it appeared to be a part of the clan-based territorial system. Among the Gonds, the territorial unit of *garh* was coterminous with the territorial unit of clan (*gotra*). The development of the original territorial group system into the *garh* system has been traced to the Rajput influence which should be investigated a little more critically.[53] In those areas where states did not emerge from the indigenous matrix this kind of development from the territorial system is not noticeable. The Cheros developed a different kind of four-tier territorial system with clan-based village as the unit above *chatāi*. The Gond kingdom consisted of the two largest territorial units divided into 18 *garhs* (forts), sub-divided into units of 84 villages (*chaurāsīs*), which were broken up further into units of 12 villages (*barhoṭs*).[54] Under the Cheros the *lāts* were initially divided into units of 12 and five.

The rajas became the agents of brāhmaṇical social change and its pace-setters to their people. Generous grants of lands tempted brāhmaṇas from upper and central India to settle in the new lands and oblige their masters with drawing up fabricated genealogies which established a link between the mythical heroes and the newly converted rulers. The striking similarities between the accounts of the origin of Chotanagpur raj family[55] and Bhumij rulers of Barabhum given in the *Brahmāṇḍa* section of *Bhaviṣya Purāṇa* illustrate that they did not even exercise elementary caution in avoiding duplication. The brāhmaṇa chronicler of the Nagbansi annals also gave a brāhmaṇical account of the history of the Mundas through their patriarch, Madra Munda.[56] The Ahoms made generous grants of lands to temples and brāhmaṇas for charitable purposes. The brāhmaṇas expounded the Hindu law. The Ahom court patro-

52. R. S. Sharma, op. cit., pp. 106-7.
53. Quoted in S. Sinha, op. cit.
54. Ibid.
55. Haldar, op. cit.
56. Ibid. p. 269.

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nized the translation of Sanskrit classics, epics and Purāṇas, and their rajas claimed to be the votaries of the three major cults in the Brahmaputra valley: Śaivism, Śāktism and Vaiṣṇavism. Their social institutions were partly Hinduized, though in the beginning they tried to stick to some elements of their tradition.[57]

The grant of service *jāgīrs* led to an influx of brāhmaṇas, Rajputs and other castes into the tribal region, which with the erosion of tribal power intensified the economic exploitation of tribals and hastened their retreat into the hills and forests, their present habitat. The brāhmaṇas performed ritual service, which replaced some of the old tribal practices; the Bhumij rulers gave up their connection with clan ossuaries. The brāhmaṇas introduced Vedic ceremonies in life-cycle functions, wearing of sacred thread, maintenance of Hindu idols, observance of food taboos, restriction on widow remarriage, child marriage, etc.

The brāhmaṇas also popularized first the kṣatriya model and then the Rajput model of protection to cows and brāhmaṇas, valour and statesmanship. The kṣatriya model remained untarnished among the Cheros and the Bhumij community; the later animosity between the Cheros and the Rajputs blurred the Rajput model for them. In the beginning the Rajput rajas were paragons of excellence for the aspiring tribal groups. But the tide has turned now because of the grant of stipends to tribal boys, legislative protection against alienation of land and the power of ballot in election which can upset the power structure in villages, and the tribals are recognizing the value of their old roots.

The tribal states performed, apart from the propagation and popularization of ritualistic brāhmaṇism, a cultural role. The rapid spread of the legends regarding the association of the tribal gods with Mahādeva and Pārvatī, Pāṇḍava heroes and Hanumān was an important result. The *pradhāns* (bards) composed epics extolling the Gond rajas. The Chero folklore eulogize Ghughulia, a culture hero, now regarded as a Rajput, but whose real identity is betrayed by his name. In Bastar the cults of the tribals and of the rajas interacted, and the cult of

57. Gait, op. cit. chapter XIII.

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Danteśvarī spread over a wide region.[58] The converted tribal rulers proved zealous builders of temples and ponds; their inscriptions and seals, art and architecture speak of their new faith. But the little tradition did not disappear; it flourished under the great traditions which were imposed or borrowed. Both got mixed up. The brāhmaṇical liturgical rituals stopped short at a stage beyond which local rituals and ceremonies held sway. Temples were located in old sacred groves, but many localized sacred groves were upgraded to higher levels in the Bhumij area, and thus the regional culture was "upgraded" and "universalized".[59] The male spirit of the Cheros became the presiding deity of the Durjag *tappā* where their capital was located; at the same time their female deity, *devī*, was identified with the mother goddess of the Vindhya cult.

58. Sinha, op. cit.
59. Ibid.

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Positivism in 19th Century Bengal: Diffusion of European Intellectual Influence in India

SABYASACHI BHATTACHARYA

I

Vague generalizations about the "spread of western ideas", the marvels wrought by the "western intellectual impact", etc., are far too common. Generalizations of this order implicity take for granted (a) the 19th century faith in "enlightenment" as an autonomous factor in history, and (b) the ethnocentric 19th century European view attributing far too much importance to the western cultural impact. Moreover, technically these generalizations are unsatisfactory in that they do not go beyond the limited possibilities of parallel-hunting and juxtaposition of analogous thoughts. To investigate problems in this area one has to make detailed studies of the communication and associative processes involved, find out the links between opinion leaders in India and the sources of European intellectual influence, identify the individuals and groups involved in the interaction—in short, to study the mechanics of the transmission of influence. Methodologically this is a demanding task. We have, however, attempted this in the case of the positivist movement, as we have a vast collection of papers, including private correspondence between Indian and English positivists, in the Richard Congreve collection at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Conservative thought in India, especially in the context of western intellectual impact (often reinforcing the conservative strand in social and political

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thinking), has not been studied with the attention its ever-present threat demands. Thus we have paid little attention to conservatism in the early 19th century Bengal typified by Radhakanta Deb of the Dharma Sabha. This is not necessarily because of an implicit judgement against Radhakanta Deb or because of our identification with what Rammohan Roy stood for. It is because conservatism works in quiet ways, and it is change, revolutionary and dramatic change, which leaves a greater impression on our mind. The present paper attempts to study one aspect of the conservative strand in social and political thinking.

II

The influence of Comte on Indian thinking was mediated by the English positivists. This was in part because the "English-educated" Indians had no direct access to Comte's works. Unlike his peers and contemporaries, such as Mill or Spencer, Comte did not find a place in the university curriculum, and the Indian reading public, generally cut off from the intellectual trends outside the Anglo-Saxon world, became aware of his works only after they were translated into English. The impact of Comte's writings began to be felt after the publication of Harriet Martineau's version of his *Positive Philosophy* in 1853.[1] Other enthusiastic converts to the growing school of positivism followed Martineau's example and made more works of the French philosopher available to the English-reading public. S. Lobb of the I.C.S. published an anthology from Comte in 1871.[2] The translation of Comte's *Catechism* came out a year after his death.[3] With the completion of the four volumes of *System of Positive Polity* in 1877 the main corpus of Comte's works became available in English, thanks to the efforts of the

1. Auguste Comte, *Positive Philosophy* (London, 1853), 2 vols. The earliest known reference to Comte in Indian writings occurs in 1856. Harish Chander Mookerjee, *Lectures on Religious Subjects* (Calcutta, 1887). The date of Mookerjee's speech, 1856, is also to be found in J. C. Ghosh, *Brahman the Priest* (Calcutta, 1888), p. 45.

2. *A Brief View of Positivism* (Calcutta, 1871).

3. A. Comte, *The Catechism of Positivism or Summary Exposition of the Universal Religion* (London, 1858).

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former pupils of Congreve at Wadham College, Oxford, J. H. Bridges, Frederic Harrison and E. S. Beesly. Some of the early Bengali converts such as Justice D. N. Mitra and K. K. Bhattacharya had an access to Comte's works even before these were translated.[4] But such enthusiasts as had taught themselves French to read Comte or translate his writings, as Mitra did, were few in number. In the correspondence of Indian positivists with Richard Congreve we find references to positivist works which were read. The convert's curriculum included *System of Positive Policy,* Martineau's version of *Positive Philosophy,* and Comte's popularized work, *Catechism.*[5] Indeed, one notices plaintive letters to the master, Congreve, on the difficulty which the "general readers" felt in following Comte's complex thought processes.[6] Congreve's *Essays, Addresses* to the English Positivist Society, and the journal *Positivist Review* were read, the latter being received by some Indian subscribers.[7] Judging from the citations in the published works of Bankim Chandra Chatterji and Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, the leading thinkers interested in positivism were also aware of J. S. Mill, T. H. Huxley, and Herbert Spencer's critiques of Comte and the controversies in the pages of John Morley's *Fortnightly Review,* the *Edinburgh Review,* etc.

The printed word served as only one of the vehicles of positivist influence. In the small world of the urban intelligentsia the network of contacts and the influence of one's associates played an equally important role. Men with a common background or shared intellectual interests formed a nucleus which, though informal, was analogous to the political club or the

4. Sir Henry Cotton, *Indian and Home Memories* (London, 1911), p. 121; Bipin Bihari Gupta, *Purātana Prasaṅga* (Old Themes) (Calcutta, 1967), p. 39.

5. Bodleian MS, Eng. Lett. e. 71, G. Chatterji to J. Geddes, 9 Nov. 1878, f. 17; same to R. Congreve, 26 Dec. 1878, f. 18; Kissennath Mukherjee to R. Congreve, 19 Feb. 1882, f. 86; same to same. 15 May 1883 and 28 July 1883, ff. 95-100.

6. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 71, K. Mukherjee to R. Congreve, 15 May 1883 and 28 July 1883, ff. 95-100.

7. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 71, N. Majumdar to H. Cotton (?), 14 Aug. 1884, f. 85; N. N. Ghose to H. Cotton, n.d. (1882 c), f. 16; Bipin Bihari Gupta, op. cit., pp. 33-41.

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masonic lodge. Lobb, Geddes and Cotton formed such a nucleus. Lobb found among his fellow civil servants two positivist converts. One was James Geddes, who had come to India "at the top of his year" in 1861; he was close to the positivist circles in London, especially to Richard Congreve, whose sister-in-law he had married.[8] Henry Cotton was a positivist since 1867, when he heard on the eve of his departure to India Congreve's lectures on positivism. Both Geddes and Cotton had developed close contacts with leading positivists such as Professor Beesly of University College, London, George Eliot, and J. H. Bridges of Oriel College, Oxford.[9] We have letters exchanged between Congreve and Cotton extending for a period of 30 years. Lobb, Cotton and Geddes "lived in open sympathy" with the people of the country and had several Indian friends in their positivist circle.[10] Gurudas Chatterji, a teacher in Krishnagar College, was one of Lobb's recruits.[11] Cotton and Geddes brought into this group Justice D. N. Mitra of Calcutta High Court, N. N. Ghose, the editor of a Calcutta newspaper, the *Indian Nation*, and Kissennath Mukherjee, a leading lawyer.[12] Geddes was regarded by this group as their "leader in India".[13] With his death in 1880 it was felt that "we must now look on Mr Cotton as our leader in India".[14] This apostolic succession from Lobb to Geddes to Cotton, solemnly discussed in letters to Congreve, was of course purely informal, but it betokens the continuity of the group.

Another positivist nucleus centred around Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, a friend of Bankim Chandra Chatterji, Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya, a teacher in Presidency College and later a leading lawyer, and W. C. Bonnerjee, a successful barrister who

8. H. Cotton, op. cit., pp. 136-37.
9. Ibid. p. 148, Royden Harrison, "Professor Beesly and the Working Class Movement", *Essays in Labour History* (London, 1960), p. 205.
10. H. Cotton, op. cit., p. 137.
11. N. N. Ghose to H. Cotton, 28 Dec. 1882, ff. 49-56.
12. Amritalal Basu, *Jibanī Saṅgraha* (collected biographies) (Calcutta n.d. 1291 *c.* V. S.), p. 54.
13. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 71, G. Chatterji to J. Geddes, 9 Feb. 1880, f. 25.
14. G. Chatterji to R. Congreve, 25 April 1880, f. 27.

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subsequently became President of the Indian National Congress.[15] Bhattacharya, Ghosh and Bankim Chandra Chatterji were contemporaries in Presidency College during 1857-60. W. C. Bonnerjee was persuaded by Ghosh and Congreve, whom he had met in London, to join the Positivist Society formally in 1896, although he was not in the inner circle.[16] Bankim Chandra's interest in positivism can be conjectured from the numerous references to Comteism in his writings; but his close contact with the positivist circle has been established only about 30 years after his death, thanks to his unpublished letters to Ghosh.[17] The latter, though a lesser intellect than Bankim, was the centre of this group, and carried on a voluminous correspondence with Congreve from 1878 till Congreve's death in 1899.[18] With the English positivists in this country, however, Ghosh and his friends had little contact initially. He expressed to Geddes "a sense of coldness and distance and of distrust" which formed a "barrier ... between the native people and Europeans in this country".[19] In 1878 when Geddes asked him to join his group Ghosh refused.[20] Apart from the racial feelings Ghosh refers to, there was also some hidden rivalry and rancour. The members of Geddes's group in their letters to Cotton and Congreve were prone to run down Ghosh as "illibe-

15. Bipin Bihari Gupta, op. cit., p. 41. Somendranath Basu, *Kāchher Mānush Bankimchandra* (Bankimchandra from Near: Anthology of memoirs of his contemporaries, Calcutta, 1964, p. 13). In 1883 and 1886 Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was Deputy Magistrate at Habra near the Kidderpore residence of J. C. Ghosh and visited him often. His unpublished letters on Hinduism (to Ghosh) were possibly written at that time. On Bankim's posting, see *Calcutta Gazette*, 14 Feb. 1883 and 5 June 1886.

16. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 70, Ghosh to Congreve, f. 282.

17. These letters, discovered around 1937, were written to one "J", presumably Jogendra Chandra Ghosh; they are undated but from internal evidence we have concluded that they were written not earlier than December 1882 and not later than 1890. These have been published as *Letters on Hinduism* (Calcutta, 1940).

18. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 70, volume consisting of letters from Ghosh, 8 Dec. 1878 to 7 Nov. 1898, to Congreve. There are some letters to Cotton and Geddes.

19. MS, e. 70, J. C. Ghosh to Geddes, 20 Oct. 1878.

20. Ibid. Same to same, 16 Nov. 1878.

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ral", "too metaphysical to be a positivist", etc.[21]

At any rate, the activities of informal groups gradually led to the formation of a formal association. In the 1890s Congreve, in his annual addresses to the London Positivist Society, regularly refers to the Calcutta Association. References to "the collective bodies of disciples wherever they are found—Brazilio-Chilean, Indians or English", to Festivals of Humanity conducted simultaneously in "Paris, Calcutta, Rio-de-Janeiro, Liverpool, Newcastle, Leicester" were calculated to convey an impression that he was at the helm of a vast international movement.[22] He was far from being any such thing. However, there were these well-organized positivist bodies, and Calcutta was the centre of one of them. We hear of the efforts to organize the Calcutta Positivist Society in 1878. But probably it was not set up till 1882.[23] On 1 January that year the Festival of Humanity was celebrated for the first time in India. Kissennath Mukherjee reported to Congreve this "momentous" event presided over by Cotton, and said hopefully "we are going to have recruits by and by".[24] The number of recruits is unknown if that means members paying subscription. But we have some lists of the members and guests who attended the Society's meetings called Festivals (prescribed by Comte and regularly observed in the Society). If one compares two of these lists dated December 1887 and January 1898 one is struck by two facts: first, that although the number of participants was small it was what would be called today an élite gathering (the legal profession and the landlord class being well represented); and second, that the old names continued to figure prominently and not many new ones were added.[25] One gathers the impression that the leaders of the Positivist Society were interested in

21. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 71, N. N. Ghose to H. Cotton, n.d. (1882 c.), f. 46. G. Chatterjee to Congreve, 25 April 1880, f. 27.

22. R. Congreve, *Religion of Humanity: Annual Address* (London, 1891), p. 18; *Address* (London, 1893), p. 7.

23. The only records relating to this association are to be found in the Congreve Papers.

24. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 71, K. Mukheriee to R. Congreve, 19 Feb. 1882, f. 86.

25. Ibid. N. N. Ghose to R. Congreve, 20 Feb. 1883, f. 38; MS, Eng.

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recruiting mainly men of high social status, perhaps even pursuing them to bring them within the fold. J. C. Ghosh writes thus about W. C. Bonnerjee, a new recruit:

> Mr Bonnerjee's support is very acceptable to me as far as I can get it: his connections with European society are growing. He lives in European style. His services on several occasions have been very valuable and his kindness to me very marked.... He is a thorough agnostic and it is out of the question that he will ever take to Comte's teachings. He has been a subscriber for the last two years but that I think is due to his regard for me, rather than for our religion. But he does appreciate our movement in a way. He is almost the very soul of the Indian National Congress.[26]

We extract this long quotation just to illustrate that Bonnerjee's connection with the Congress is mentioned as an afterthought and the stress is on his social status. This attitude is a reflection of the élitist point of view of the leading positivists in India.

This is a convenient point to leave the question of mechanics of the diffusion of positivist influence, the means of its transmission, and move towards the question of the nature and consequences of this influence.

III

Positivism made very slow headway; it was quite unlike the dramatic explosion of ideas of the "Young Bengal" days. One reason was that it was repudiated by the established philosophers in England, Herbert Spencer, T. H. Huxley, and, in more qualified terms, J. S. Mill.[27] Mill's critique in particular received wide attention in India.[28] The establishment journals

Lett. e. 70, f. 304 (list relating to meeting on 1 January 1898). Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, op. cit. (list of members present on 31 December 1887).

26. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 70, J. C. Ghosh to R. Congreve, f. 282.

27. On the Comteist controversialists, see W. M. Simon, op. cit., ch. VII.

28. *J. S. Mill, Auguste Comte and Positivism* is noticed by Bankim Chandra and condemned as an unwarranted attack on positivism, *Bangadarshana*,, 1280 (Śrāvan) V. S.

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in India such as the *Calcutta Review* were anti-positivist: its unkind review of Lobb's *A Brief View of Positivism* (1872) and the ostentatious segregation of Geddes's article in a separate section with a special editorial disclaimer of responsibility typify the hostility to the positivist heretics.[29] Although there was no censorship on Comte's works, as there was in Russia till the 1860s,[30] the education system did not promote the study of Comte. Despite all this positivism did infiltrate through channels already mentioned. In part this was because utilitarianism had already laid the foundation of a secular and empiricist outlook. In part it was also on account of dissatisfaction with utilitarianism which Bankim Chandra voiced: that there were many things beyond the felicific calculus, that utilitarianism "does not take cognizance of what along with the good claims our love and worship, and to regulate our life".[31] The intellectual appeal of positivism lay in its being a "secular religion" which denied God and based itself on social ethics. Although, as D. G. Charlton[32] and F. E. Manuel[33] have pointed out, even in its homeland positivism failed as a "rational" religion in the accepted sense of the term, it did hold out a promise for a time and attracted many people. Self-conscious and perspicacious about the processes of which he himself was a part, Bankim Chandra felt that the rejection of the "Hindu code of personal and social ethic" started a search for "our new code of morality". "Our Deism, our Theism, our Brahmoism, our Comteism ... what are all these 'isms' at the bottom but merely so many different embodiments of a strong desire to exempt ourselves from the obligation of Hinduism", he asked.[34] Finally, positivism engendered the hope that the scientific

29. *Calcutta Review*, ciii, 208, lv (1872), 340-81.

30. J. H. Billington, "The Intelligentsia and the Religion of Humanity". *American Historical Review*, lxv (April 1960), 807-21.

31. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, *Letters on Hinduism*, pp. 13-14.

32. *Secular Religions in France 1815-70* (London, 1963).

33. *The Prophets of Paris* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962).

34. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, "Confessions of a Young Bengal" (Anonymous, but identified on the basis of a letter from Bankim to the Editor), *Mookerjee's Magazine*, December 1872, pp. 337-42, reprinted in *Sāhitya Parishad* edition, p. 69.

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approach to society would provide the answer to social problems. The faith of such men as Bankim and J. C. Ghosh in intellect and the leadership of the enlightened as a means of social progress was reinforced by the positivist philosophy.

In order to indicate the influence and transmutation of positivist ideas in 19th century Bengal we may cite as two examples Bankim Chandra Chatterji who applied positivism in the sphere of social thought and Jogendra Chandra Ghosh who applied it to political thought. Jogendra Chandra Ghosh became a positivist in the early 1870s, but he did not join the Positivist Society in Calcutta till 1885. A prosperous zamindar, Ghosh became its generous patron from 1885 onward and his works, published sometimes under the imprimatur of the society (addresses to the society) and sometimes independently, reflected the most orthodox positivist views. We have no evidence of his interest in politics before the Ilbert Bill agitation, but from then on even his philosophical writings acquire a strong political content.

In Bankim Chandra's intellectual evolution positivism did not become a major influence before the 1880s. He was, of course, in contact with friends and acquaintances who were positivists, and in his journal *Bangadarshana* articles on Comte had appeared. In one of his early English essays "Confessions of a Young Bengal" he refers to Comteism. In it he questions the middle class values—the "tutelary deities" of the new middle classes, "comfort and his brother, respectability". "We have cast away caste.... But we are not such ultra-radicals as to adopt for our watchward [sic] the impracticable formula of Equality and Fraternity". The moral inadequacy of the culture of the new middle classes remained a recurring theme in Bankim's writings. Was positivism the moral code they needed? Bankim turned to Comteism when his contacts with his positivist friends Jogendra Chandra Ghosh and Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya were renewed in 1883. He quotes from Comte's *Catechism* in his novel *Devīchaudhurānī* (1884), in an essay entitled "Chittashuddhi" (1885) and frequently and extensively in his work *Dharmatattva* (1888). Some time between 1883 and 1888 Bankim Chandra wrote a number of long letters,

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intended for publication but unpublished during his lifetime, to J. C. Ghosh on Hinduism in relation to positivism.[35]

Bankim Chandra seems to have derived from positivism a sociological approach to religious literature and institutions. This is exemplified in his attempts to explain parts of Hindu literature as primitive nature myths,[36] the application of modern techniques of internal and external criticism to the mythic literature surrounding Krishna,[37] his approach to Hinduism in the perspective of human cultural evolution, and in his early faith (which he later repudiated) in empiricism as the sole source of knowledge.[38] On the other hand Bankim Chandra had from the beginning reservations about positivism. He was not prepared (like John Morley, Beesly and Bridges) to accept positivism as a religion, though he accepted it as a method to understand religion as a phenomenon. Moreover, he thought that a crude application of positivism—or for that matter any European "ism"—to Hindu institutions in the name of reform would destroy Hinduism. He recognized that there were institutions and customs in need of reform. "Hinduism is in need of a reformation—not an unprecedented necessity for an ancient religion", but it cannot be substituted with some other religion.[39] Bankim quotes from Comte's *Catechism* to the effect that the religion of a people must be in agreement with the "nature" and culture of the people.[40] To ensure that reform must be undertaken by the enlightened Hindus. There are myths, customs, institutions, which are unnecessary "adjuncts" of Hinduism: these are "to be found among the lower strata of Hindu society and it is the duty of the better educated Hindu" to eradicate them.[41] Thus those who are better educated would purify Hinduism, but "it is by no means necessary that we

35. Published in 1940.

36. Chatterji, *Letters on Hinduism,* letters 4 and 5. Bankim draws upon some contemporary anthropologists as well.

37. *Krishnacharitra* (Calcutta, 1886).

38. "Jñāna" (knowledge), *Vividhaprabandha.*

39. *Letters on Hinduism,* letter 2, p. 12.

40. The original passage read: "For a system to rise and be generally accepted it must be... in agreement with our nature and far from unfavourable to our progress", A. Comte, *Catechism,* p. 384.

41. *Letters on Hinduism,* p. 44.

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should revert, like the late Dayanand Saraswati, to old and archaic" features of Hinduism.[42]

The difference between the "early Bankim" and "later Bankim" has often been pointed out, the latter being more of a Hindu, more of a revivalist. But even during the period when Bankim was closest to positivism he was ambivalent. His debts to positivism were many, but his loyalties were divided. Bankim eventually solved the conflict between the rationalist premises of positivism and what he conceived to be "essential Hinduism" by drifting away from positivism. He made a habit of inserting, in later editions of his works, footnotes which said, "we have given up these opinions now".[43] In particular his attitude to social reforms by legislation hardened.[44] The general positivist line of thinking was that the "conqueror's self-assertiveness" and meddlesomeness must be combated and that reforms might be postponed till Indians could legislate for themselves.

IV

We now turn from the social to the political aspect of positivism. Positivist political thinking is distinct from the mainstream of bourgeois political thought in Europe in the latter half of the 19th century in two respects. First, the positivists were consistently anti-imperialist, in line with Comte's anti-colonial sentiments. Second, they criticized parliamentarianism in terms which had distinct anti-democratic élitist overtones. In India both these characteristics of positivist thinking appear in a developed form.

The anti-imperialist writings of Richard Congreve, the father-figure of the movement, had a formative influence. Congreve launched on his career as a polemist with two anti-imperialist blasts: a tract on *Gibraltar or The Foreign Policy of England* (1856), urging the restoration of Gibraltar to Spain, and a

42. Ibid. p. 12.

43. See, for example, his essay on "Jñāna" (knowledge) in *Vividha-prabandha*. More remarkable is his repudiation of his essay on equality, "Sāmya", Somendranath Basu, op. cit., p. 16. He also regretted his early atheism, p. 13.

44. J. C. Ghosh, *Brahman the Priest, Address on the Festival of the Dead* (at Positivist Society, Calcutta, n.d. 1888?), p. 2.

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tract on *India* (1857), proposing British withdrawal "from our occupation of India without further delay".[45] Comte recognized Congreve, after the publication of the first anti-imperialist tract, as the leader of the English positivist school. The tract on *India,* dedicated to Comte, was published shortly after his death, and met a hostile reception in the midst of the post-1857 frenzy. Congreve questioned the moral basis of the empire in India. "To subordinate politics to morals ... such is the aim of positivism, viewed as a political philosophy.... I have been bold, as the avowed servant of humanity, to raise my voice against any longer continuance of the enforced unnatural union of India and England."[46]

As the positivist circle in India grew, Congreve provided the kind of moral support that his correspondents in India apparently needed. He consistently maintained his anti-imperialist stand, in private and in public, with a high moral fervour. He foresaw, he writes to Lobb in 1872, "that forces are arising in Asia which will end in either the bowing to them of the European intruder or his forcible expulsion".[47] He thought that his countrymen were blind to this fact because they were misled by the vested interests—the "ordinary publicmen and mercantile men" who exploited the empire,[48] "the commercial classes who are remorseless when new markets are possible",[49] and the established "powerful classes" with whom "war is popular".[50] On every issue ranging from the Partition of Africa "with the most complete disregard of the claim of its natural inhabitants"[51] to the annexation of Burma and intervention in Manipur,[52] Congreve could rightly claim to have "spoken freely the

45. Richard Congreve, *India* (London, 1857), p. 6.

46. Ibid. p. 25; cf. W. M. Simon, *European Positivism in the 19th Century: An Essay in Intellectual History* (Ithaca, 1962), p. 13, on Comte and Congreve.

47. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 184, R. Congreve to S. Lobb, 16 Feb. 1872, f. 33.

48. Ibid. Same to same, 16 May 1870.

49. Ibid. Congreve to Cotton, 9 Dec. 1885, f. 35.

50. Loc. cit.

51. R. Congreve, *Religion of Humanity*, p. 20.

52. R. Congreve, *Address* (London, 1892), p. 12.

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condemnation which all higher human morality accords to such oppression".[53]

The English members of the Indian positivist circle were in the civil service and, therefore, silent on issues such as these. The only exception was James Geddes. In his essay "Our Commercial Exploitation of the Indian Population" and in his deposition as a witness before the Select Committee on Indian Finance he exposed what he called the statics and dynamics (Comteian phrases) of economic exploitation in India.[54] Congreve too, possibly drawing on Geddes's knowledge, put the economic issues in the forefront—the tax on salt, the "concession to Manchester" made "silently, stealthily" on the issue of cotton duties, and the financial interests at stake.[55]

The Indian positivists seem to have become alive to the anti-colonial aspect of positivism only after the Ilbert Bill agitation. Positivism provided a moral and philosophical basis to a racial grievance. Offence to the natives of India was an offence to the Religion of Humanity. Jogendra Chandra Ghosh evinces political interests for the first time in 1883.[56] His friend N. N. Ghose, the editor of the *Indian Nation* and something like a Secretary of the Positivist Society in this period, urged Congreve to expose the "wild utterances and lawless conduct of the Anglo-Indians"[57] and the hollowness of "the old fiction about justice, humanity, and equality in the eyes of the law".[58] Among prominent positivists these two and W. C. Bonnerjee became active members of the Congress. J. C. Ghosh moved a resolution in the Congress session of 1896 expressing humanitarian sympathy for the oppressed tea plantation labourers; the resolution, seconded by Bipin Pal and passed, was reiterated in the suc-

53. R. Congreve, *Religion of Humanity*.

54. James Geddes, "Our Commercial Exploitation of the Indian Population", *Calcutta Review*. lv (1872), 340-81; cf. S. Bhattacharya, *Financial Foundations of the British Raj* (Simla, 1971), p. 32.

55. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 184, Congreve to Cotton, 5 Apr. 1886, f. 37; Congreve to Lobb, 16 May 1870.

56. See letters of 1883-85 in Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 70.

57. Bod, MS, Eng. Lett. e. 71, N. N. Ghose to Congreve, n.d. f. 44.

58. Ibid. same to same, 16 June 1883, f. 40.

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cessive sessions from 1897 to 1901.[59] Bonnerjee was, of course, Congress President in 1885. There was, however, nothing especially positivistic in the nationalism of these members of the positivist movement who engaged in nationalist politics. As J. C. Ghosh put it in 1896, the positivists' voice was an indistinguishable part of the Congress chorus.[60]

The attitude of the positivists in Europe towards parliamentarianism was sceptical if not altogether inimical. Congreve impressed on his Indian correspondents the inadvisability of Indians taking to the parliamentary path: "I think the policy an erroneous one which leads the Hindoos to wish to take part in our parliamentary system. It compromises their whole position as regards their relation to the government intruded on them."[61] He was also distrustful of India's champions in the British Parliament, especially Bradlaugh,[62] and others such as Wedderburn whose "advocacy is somewhat coloured by his desire to get into Parliament".[63]

There was an even more extreme anti-parliamentary streak in Comte's outlook. It has been recently pointed out that Comte in his letters to Czar Nicholas I in 1852-53 complimented him on his firmness in excluding "western agitation and anarchy" and suggested schemes of "bypassing the atomised parliamentary stage of West European development and adopting directly an integrating new Religion of Humanity".[64]

This feature of positivism appears in full-blown form in the political writings of Jogendra Chandra Ghosh in the 1890s at a time when he was the undoubted leader of the "Indo-Positivists". In three works, *Brahman the Priest, The Political Side of Brahmanism*[65] and *The Hindu Theocracy: How to Further its Ends*,[66] Ghosh displays the élitist aversion, inherent in Comte-

59. Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (New Delhi, 1969), pp. 366-68.

60. Jogendra Chandra Ghosh, *The Political Side of Brahmanism* (Calcutta, n.d.) [1896], p. 3.

61. Bod. MS, Eng. Lett. e. 184, Congreve to Cotton, 26 Feb. 1886, f. 36.

62. Ibid. same to same, 5 Feb. 1891, f. 40.

63. Ibid, same to same, 20 June 1890, f. 39.

64. James H. Billington, "The Intelligentsia and the Religion of Humanity", *American Historical Review*, lxv (April 1960), 807.

65. (Calcutta, n.d. 1896?)

66. (Calcutta, 1897).

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ism, to democratic institutions. Comte's obscure reflections on the "absolute preponderance of a philosophic caste", the Brahmans, in the "theocratic constitution" of India and his exhortation to "the Brahmans who have become positivists to modify their theocratic milieu"[67] provided the point of departure for Ghosh's speculations. He was, of course, correct in detecting the fundamentally élitist propensities in Comteism. Seizing upon that element Ghosh elaborated a positivist approach to Indian politics. It can be summed up as follows: "the fitness of democratic principle for our theocratic society" is doubtful; both democratic and autocratic forms of government are alien to . . . habits and traditions of the Hindus; the brahmans and the "patriciate" have lost their preponderance and "that moral feeling of reverence" which helped maintain "a wonderful solidarity is fast fading away under the preachings of our popular leaders about equality, competition and change"; stability and patrician-brahman leadership can be maintained only if the "westernisers" in the Congress eschew the alien parliamentary path and "co-operate with the Revivalists" who alone can control the "dumb millions at the bottom".[68]

The remarkable thing about this distinguished zamindar patron of the British Indian Association, leader of the positivists and supporter of the "best elements" in the Congress, is the clarity of his conservative vision.[69] Although he was a positivist, he spoke not to them but to the orthodox Hindu. Although he was not a revivalist, he promoted their cause. Although he was himself westernized, he would like the westernizers to modify their Congress policy so as to converge with the revivalists and the country at large.[70] He was prepared to make all these compromises to restore stability and "brahmanic-patriciate" leadership. He was not unaware that much of what was rational and scientific in positivism could not be reconciled with the creed of the revivalists. But, he says, this is politics and "my religious creed [i.e. positivism] has nothing to do with

67. A. Comte, *The Catechism of Positivism or Summary Exposition of Universal Religion*, pp. 381-82; *System of Positive Polity*, iv, 607-09.
68 J. C. Ghosh, *The Political Side of Brahmanism*, pp. 5, 26, 32.
69. Ibid. p. 38.
70. Ibid. p. 41.

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the discussions here"; "though I ought to speak as a positivist I have to turn my eyes away from positivist audience".[71] Thus the compartmentalization of personal values on the one hand and political commitments on the other, a familiar situation, served to rationalize the surrender to compulsions which conflicted with ideas highly valued in the abstract.

V

Positivism did not mean the same thing to all men. In a very broad sense it represented to some people a scientific and rational method or approach. Some others called themselves positivists as they accepted the world-outlook in Comte's sociology. Finally, some accepted it as a religion. Of these three tendencies of mind the first is evinced in Bankim Chandra, the second in J. C. Ghosh, and the third in such men as Geddes. As Harrison points out, the confusion between these different connotations of positivism was and remains a source of continual dispute.[72]

It is doubtful whether positivism as a church had many Indian adherents. Many of them did attend the festivals of the Positivist Society, the prayer meetings, etc. But in their social behaviour they were defaulters. Justice Dwarkanath Mitra married a second time after the death of his first wife and pleaded that Comte's injunctions against this were not as strong as the pressure Mitra was subjected to.[73] Earlier he had refused to perform his father's *śrāddha*. We find J. C. Ghosh writing to Congreve that he would arrange his daughter's marriage on her 10th birthday, though he knew it was "against positivist faith".[74] Twenty years later Ghosh writes: "I certainly belong to Brahmanist society.... I am bound to it by birth for all my Positivist ties... [it] holds a living control on my daily conduct".[75] Thus social ties and pressures prevailed over positivist

71. Ibid. p. 2.
72. Royden Harrison, op. cit., pp. 206-07.
73. Bipin Bihari Gupta, op. cit. (memoir of Krishna Kamal Bhattacharya), pp. 35-36.
74. Bod. MS, Eng. lett. e. 70, J. C. Ghosh to R. Congreve, 13 June 1879.
75. J. C. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 8.

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convictions. But positivism as a scientific tendency of mind did leave a mark. It is reflected, however weakly, in Bankim's efforts to reinterpret Hinduism, in Justice D. N. Mitra's patronage of Mohendra Lal Sarkar's *Vijñāna Sabhā*, in the national education movement (promoted by Satish Mukherjee, son of the positivist Kissennath) at a later date, in the efforts to recover "the positive sciences of the Hindus".[76] It will, however, be unwarranted to attribute to positivism too much influence in this respect. In Europe, as in India, ideas known as distinctively positivistic in mid-19th century became commonplaces of civilized thought, having been "absorbed in the general philosophic and political atmosphere", by the beginning of the 20th century.[77]

Several factors account for the intellectual appeal of positivism in late 19th century Bengal—the dissatisfaction with utilitarianism and its morally irrelevant felicific calculus, the quest for a secular religion based on social ethic, and the vague hope that intellectual progress towards a positive, scientific stage would lead to the solution of social problems by the application of the science of society. Positivism was an integrated system of ideas with "unity and interdependence" ("esprit d'ensemble", characteristic of the Catholic and Hindu belief systems, to which Comte likened his philosophy in this respect).[78] T. H. Huxley was not altogether frivolous when he characterized positivism as Catholicism minus Christianity.[79] Positivism was an all-embracing system which, Comte suggests, accorded with the Hindu (or theocratic) style of thought. At any rate, the grand positivist system seemed for a time to promise more than the "ad hocism" of contemporary British pragmatism. The freedom of positivism from the usual Christian prejudices against Hinduism, its anti-colonialism, and its relative freedom from ethnocentrism made particular appeal to the 19th century Indian mind.

76. Amritalal Basu, op. cit., p. 52; cf. Preface to Brajendranath Seal, *The Positive Sciences of Ancient Hindus* (London, 1916), p. iii.

77. F. S. Marvin, "Frederic Harrison", *Humanity: the Positivist Review*, no. 385 (January 1925), p. 4.

78. A. Comte, *System of Positive Polity*, iv, 607.

79. R. Congreve, *Essays* (London, 1871), p. 265.

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A full comprehension of the impact of positivist ideas on 19th century Bengal will also require the social contextual study of the role of positivism, and at this stage one can only frame some tentative hypotheses. There is a marked contrast between the period we have studied here and the days of "Young Bengal", the early days of the so-called Bengal renaissance. The socially ascendant groups in the early 19th century had an attitude of scepticism, an almost painful sense of uncertainty and spasms of doubt about the traditional inherited world-view. Their attitude was derived not merely from the diffusion of western ideas as is commonly granted, but from the very fact of their being mobile socially. That there was a kind of corporate mobility affecting certain caste groups as a whole in earlier periods is beyond doubt. But the social mobility in early 19th century Bengal was distinctive in that groups which gained social ascendancy did so, not so much as caste groups, but as heterogeneous occupational groups with some shared characteristics in terms of a newly acquired culture and economic position. Moreover, in cases of caste groups moving up in the pre-capitalist society there need not necessarily be any fundamental restructuring of the world-outlook comparable, in scope and depth, to the emergence of new classes.

Reshuffling in society is a continuous process, but it is doubtful whether at any earlier period in modern Bengal the pace was so fast and the result as drastic as it was in the early half of the 19th century. When positivism made some headway in the latter half of the century, the social hierarchy—the settled world of zamindars (those who had survived the post-1793 wave of dispossession and become gentry precisely during that period) and the "English-educated" urban professional classes (which had begun to solidify into a status conscious group with the assurance, complacency and exclusiveness of second or third generation members of the middle order of society)—was stabilized. The whole process engendered and drew sustenance from a world-outlook different from that of the early period when many old certainties had been questioned. The beneficiaries of this process of stabilization now evolved a world-outlook which embodied an attempt to return to the old modes of thought positing unquestionable certainties, if not

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to the old certainties themselves. The latter tendency is identical with revivalism; the former, for want of a better word, is often called conservatism. Positivism was not easily reconcilable with revivalism, but it reinforced conservatism. The western intellectual impact on Young Bengal in early 19th century, though confined to a focal point involving a small number, was a revolutionary explosion, a dramatic moment of history. The intrusion of positivism in the last decades of the 19th century was a quiet affair, a retreat to a conservative viewpoint. Perhaps in both instances the "ideas" derived from the west provided, to use Max Weber's analogy, the track but not the motive power. To interpret these ideological movements merely as the result of "spread of western ideas" is to miss the point.

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The Social Implications of the Political Thought of Raja Rammohun Roy

S. N. MUKHERJEE

Rammohun Roy is, by any standard, an outstanding figure in modern history. His 18 years in Calcutta and London are crowded with activities which have left a deep imprint upon Indian society. He was a great scholar in theology and mastered a number of languages. He pioneered the modern critical study of the classical Indian texts, inaugurated a number of social and religious reform movements and furthered the cause of modern education in Bengal. A successful pamphleteer and an impressive journalist, he wrote with ease and competence on various topics from *satī* and the moral teachings of Jesus to the revenue administration in Bengal. What is more, he wrote in five languages, Bengali, Hindustani, English, Sanskrit and Persian. Above all, he has left behind him a rich legacy of ideas, the central theme of which is the freedom of the individual, which has inspired generations of Indians into political action. Perhaps we can measure the great impact he made upon his young contemporaries from the following remark in *Calcutta Review*, 1845 :

> Viewed, in reference to native amelioration, the present is perhaps the most interesting and eventful period in the history of the country. It might be properly called the age of enquiry and investigation. The metropolis of British India is now undergoing a remarkable transition; customs conservated by immemorial observance and interwoven with

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> the fibres of the Hindu society are unhesitantly renounced as incompatible with the laws of God and man. . . . But in reflecting on the change now being wrought by educational and other instrumentalities on the native mind, we are irresistibly reminded of the impetus originally communicated to it by Rammohun Roy. His name is inseparably connected with a great moral revolution. It is, therefore, peculiarly interesting to trace the history of this extraordinary man, for it is in a great measure the history of the Revolution.[1]

Thus the most interesting part of Rammohun's life and works was not the movement to abolish *satī*, nor the struggle to establish modern education, nor the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj nor the passionate plea for the freedom of Press, but the sum total of all these and more. He inaugurated the modern age in India by ushering in an era of inquiry and investigation. No doubt, his scepticism and humanism touched only a small segment of society, but the philosophy of the Enlightenment had also touched a small number of philosophers in Europe, and yet its importance cannot be denied in the history of ideas or in 18th century politics. The "moral revolution" affected the course of Indian history in the 19th century, for it was tied up with social reform and economic enterprise. No attempt has so far been made to study the "moral revolution" in relation to social and economic changes. We are all indebted to the old scholars such as N. N. Chatterjee,[2] Miss Sophia Dobson Collet,[3] B. N. Banerjee,[4] J. K. Majumdar[5] and to modern scholars such as D. K. Biswas and P. C. Ganguli[6]

1. *Calcutta Review*, iv (July-December 1845), 385.
2. *Mahātmā Rājā Rāmmohan Rāyer Jībanacarita* [in Bengali], (Calcutta, 1881).
3. *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy* (London, 1900).
4. (a) *Raja Rammohun Roy's Mission to England* (Calcutta, 1926);
   (b) *Rāmmohan Rāy* [in Bengali], in *Sāhitya Sādhaka Caritamālā*, 5th edn, i, 16 (Calcutta, 1367, Bengali era).
   Banerjee also wrote numerous articles on Rammohun Roy in English and Bengali in various learned journals of Calcutta.
5. (ed.), *Raja Rammohun Roy and Progressive Movements in India; A Selection from Records 1775-1845 with an Historical Introduction* (Calcutta, 1941).
6. Biswas and Ganguli edited the third edition of S. D. Collet's works, op. cit. (Calcutta, 1962).

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for their painstaking researches into the life and letters of Raja Rammohun Roy. They have added much to our information about the long career of the Indian reformer, but have not helped much in our understanding of his ideas in depth.

B. B. Majumdar,[7] in his pioneering work on the history of modern Indian political thought, has given us a fair, if uncritical, summary of Rammohun's ideas. In recent years many scholars in India and America have followed Majumdar's lead in this field.[8] These scholars agree about an intellectual crisis in India, more particularly in Bengal, during the early 19th century and assume that rationalism and the spirit of enquiry in the writings of such men as Rammohun Roy were a direct result of English education. Following K. M. Panikkar,[9] we can describe the process as the return voyage of Vasco da Gama—the discovery of Europe by Asia. This was not a physical journey in search of spices and Christians, but an intellectual journey which brought back humanism and scepticism. However, English education and Western impact, important as they might be, do not fully explain the intellectual movements in Bengal during the first half of the 19th century. Already the moral and intellectual crisis had affected those who had not gone through any English school. No doubt, they had acquired some workable knowledge of English and got in touch with the British officers, but they read Bentham, Blackstone and other notable English authors long after they had reached their manhood. In other words, the Western impact on Rammohun and his friends was conditioned by their traditional attitudes and ideas which were, to quote Gandhi, part of their "training and home influence". Many Indians and some Western scholars hold that the Indians were not just borrowing from the West but were trying to assimilate

7. *History of Political Thought from Rammohun to Dayananda (1821-84)*, (Calcutta, 1934), pp. 1-77.

8. See S. Sen, *The Political Thought of Tagore* (Calcutta, 1947) and D. Mackenzie Brown, *The White Umbrella* (Berkley, 1959).

9. *Asia and Western Dominance* (London, 1953), pp. 315-18: cf. E. J. Hobsbawm, "The End of European World Domination", *Afro-Asian and World Affairs*, no. 2 (1964) 93-99.

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Western and Indian ideas.[10] What is often forgotten is that Rammohun had also inherited a social situation, which made it necessary and possible to assimilate ideas and institutions of the two cultures. English ideas would be unimportant unless there was already a group of people who found them useful and were able to reinterpret them in the light of their traditional heritage and social experience. Thus the Western impact upon Rammohun was conditioned in two ways—by the thought patterns which he had inherited and by the social circumstances in which he lived.

It is not possible to single out any particular Western work which had influenced Rammohun most. But his works and correspondence clearly show that he was well acquainted with the works of Bacon, Locke, Blackstone and Bentham.[11] It is also possible to deduce from the tenor of his arguments that he had read Montesquieu, Adam Smith and the history of modern Britain, especially the version presented by the Whigs and the Radicals.[12] But it is important to remember that the Western liberal philosophy was expressed through an idiom with which Rammohun's Indian readers, more particularly readers in Calcutta, were familiar.

The traditional educational system, the Indo-Islamic philosophy, and the brāhmaṇic metaphysics provided a frame of reference common to Rammohun and his readers. There are reasons to believe that Rammohun learnt Arabic, Persian and Islamic philosophy, probably from the Muslim scholars attached to Fort William College and the *Sadar Diwani Adalat* in Calcutta,[13] before he had time to examine the Vedāntic philosophy and European ideas. He, no doubt, knew Sanskrit before he came in contact with the Calcutta Muslim scholars and had some understanding of brāhmaṇism. But his first work does not show any trace of Vedāntic influence. It seems that he was not able to pay close attention to the Hindu philosophy before he

10. Panikkar, op. cit., pp. 320-23; cf. T. G. P. Spear, *India, Pakistan and the West*, 4th edn (London, 1967), pp. 119-22.

11. K. Nag and D. Burman (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, pts. i, iii and iv (Calcutta, 1945).

12. Ibid. pts. i and iv.

13. B. N. Banerjee, *Rammohan Ray*, pp. 201, 26-29.

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13. B. N. Banerjee, *Rammohan Ray*, pp. 201, 26-29.

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came to live in Rangpur in 1809, when Hariharānanda Tīrthasvāmī joined him. Rammohun was profoundly influenced by Hariharānanda, who was a *tāntrika*.[14] It is interesting to trace the interaction of all these ideas in Rammohun's writings.

Some writers such as Iqbal Singh and R. P. Dutt[15] have brought to our notice the social contents of Rammohun's ideas. But they have not followed their own methods rigorously to make a complete survey of his views and hence left many questions unanswered. It is not sufficient to say that Rammohun was a humanist and a Renaissance figure who focussed the causes of the new middle classes in India. We have to find out what social groups comprised the new middle classes, what their aspirations were, what new problems were created by the rise of such new social groups, how far Rammohun Roy was aware of such problems, and in what way he tried to solve them.

In our opinion Rammohun Roy had a model of society in mind. Undoubtedly his pamphlets were written in response to certain specific problems such as *satī*, freedom of the Press, and the administration of justice in Bengal, but when we consider them all together they fall into a definite pattern. He was not a political philosopher, nor a modern sociologist; he has nowhere explicitly mentioned his model. But since he was primarily a social engineer, he deliberately set out to reconstruct the society; a schematized and an idealized social system was implied in his arguments. He wanted to establish in India a social order, which would enable the individuals to maximize their abilities and bring prosperity to the whole community. Rammohun was deeply concerned with the freedom of the individual. He assumed that a man is human only so long as he is independent of the will of another. An individual is independent if he is "rational"

14. Ibid. pp. 29-31; cf. Biswas and Ganguli, op cit., pp. 101-02; B. N. Banerjee, *Rāmcandra Vidyāvagīsh, Hariharānanda Tīrthasvāmī* [in Bengali] in *Sāhitya Sādhaka Caritamālā*, i. 9., 5th edn (Calcutta, 1362, Bengali era), 27-32.

15. Iqbal Singh, *Rammohun Roy: A Biographical Inquiry into the Making of Modern India* (Bombay, 1958), pp. 5-7; cf. R. Palme Dutt, *India Today and Tomorrow* (London, 1955), p. 108.

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and the owner of his person and capacities.[16] Rammohun's faith in individualism was inspired by Western political philosophy, more particularly by the works of Locke and Bentham, but individualism was also part and parcel of the social, religious and economic aspirations of the Bengali middle class. Moreover, the social model of Rammohun—a competitive market society—corresponds to the social reality of Bengal in the early 19th century.

Rammohun and his contemporaries witnessed a disruption of the old social and economic order on account of the growth of a market, the penetration of British trade into the rural areas, famines, wars and the political "revolutions". In 1717 the English had received their "magna carta" of Eastern trade, when the Mughal emperor Farrukhsiyar conferred upon them the right to trade duty-free in exchange for a small tribute and the right to issue *dastaks* exempting goods from customs check.[17] The English had successfully exploited their "rights", and by the middle of the 18th century they had almost acquired the monopoly control over both inland and foreign trade. They put many Indian traders out of business and reduced the bargaining power of the producers, but they invested a large sum of capital in Bengal, brought foreign market nearer to the village producers and created their own middlemen.[18] This was one of the most important factors which created a social erosion in Bengal in the 18th century.

The British also helped the growth of a market in land and in land rent. The system of farming out (meaning letting out a fluctuating source of revenue income for a more or less stable annual sum to the highest bidder), which was first introduced in Calcutta, was later used extensively throughout the

16. Cf. Rammohun's briet remarks regarding modern encroachments on the ancient rights of women according to the Hindu law of inheritance in *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, ed. K. Nag and D. Burman, pt. i, 5-6. Also Ibid. pt. ii, 23.

17. S. Bhattacharya, *The East India Company and the Economy of Bengal from 1704-1740* (Calcutta, 1954), pp. 25-27.

18. Ibid. pp. 218-25.

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province, especially during the period between 1772-77.[19] This created an unprecedented instability but allowed a large-scale circulation of money and enabled new groups such as *banias, gomasthas* and moneylenders to control land and land rent and to oust the "ancient landholding families". Significantly, the "new landed aristocracy" came into existence in areas where the British first used their method of "farming out" as early as 1758, that is, in Calcutta, 24-Parganas and Burdwan.[20] The Permanent Settlement of Cornwallis did not check the "ruin" of the "ancient families", nor did it confer new rights by recognizing private property in land. The regulations only clearly defined the right of ownership and, what is more, enabled an individual to own unlimited wealth; they made land an alienable commodity for a large market and so allowed capital to purchase an unlimited amount. Elsewhere we have described the process as the growth of a market society,[21] for certain features of a capitalist system such as the frequency of payments and transactions in money, the production and distribution of resources determined by the demand of a market, and the recognition of individuals as owners of land and other resources could be found in Bengal during the late 18th century. The legal system under Cornwallis undermined the traditional allocation of work and "feudal" rights and duties including the police power of the *zamīndārs*.[22]

In the 19th century capitalism had failed to make much headway in Indian agriculture; the large farm did not necessarily grow larger; no improvement was made in the techniques of agricultural production; instead there was a fragmentation of landholdings, and the primitive techniques continued right down to our days. It is suggested that Bengal after the Permanent Settlement looked more like "France of the *ancien regime*" and less like "the England of Townsend and Tull".[23]

19. N. K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal from Plassey to the Permanent Settlement*, ii (Calcutta, 1962), 68-95.

20. Ibid. p. 31.

21. S. N. Mukherjee (ed.), *South Asian Affairs*, no. 2 (Oxford, 1966), 16-17.

22. A. Aspinal, *Cornwallis in Bengal* (Manchester, 1931), pp. 104-13.

23. R. Guha, *A Rule of Property for Bengal* (Paris, 1963), p. 152.

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It is sufficient for us to recognize that the British officers had originally designed to bring capitalist enterprise in agriculture to Bengal, and they were partially successful, to the extent of creating a market in land and land-rent and an unprecedented social mobility in that province.

The money economy and the market in land brought about a social erosion which changed the very basis of interrelationship between individuals and social groups, and created a new social class, the *bhadraloks*. Darpanereyan Tagore, Nabakrishna Dev, Ramdeolal De and similar people, who lived in Calcutta and other trade and administrative centres and made money as moneylenders, land-farmers and agents of Company officials, were the forerunners of the 19th century Calcutta *bhadraloks*. That this class owed its origin to the money economy and market in land was recognized by the contemporaries. It was stated in 1829 in the *Bengal Herald*[24] that a new class had come into existence by means of "territorial value" (increase in price of land). The Bengali counterpart of the *Bengal Herald, Bangadoot,* claimed that the market in land (which had augmented the price of land), free trade and the contact with the Europeans had helped the rise of a new class (*sreṇī*), whom they had earlier referred to as *madhyabitta* (middle income group) but which had brought about economic prosperity to Bengal. The editor compared the history of the rise of the middle classes in Bengal with that of the middle classes in England. It was suggested that the independence and stability of the English system were the result of the rise of a powerful middle class in the 18th century, and the editor hoped that the middle class in Bengal would soon receive independence (*svādhīnatā*) like its English counterpart.[25]

Earlier in 1823 Bhavanicharan Banerjee, a journalist of the orthodox party, lampooned the *bhadralok* class in his *Kalikātā Kamalālaya*. In it he described Calcutta as the abode of

24. *Bengal Herald*, 13 June 1829 in J. K. Majumdar, *Indian Speeches and Documents on British Rule 1821-1915* (Calcutta, 1937), p. 36.

25. *Bangadoot*, 13 June 1829, in B. N. Banerjee (ed.), *Sangbādpatre Sekāler Kathā*, i (1818-30), 398-99.

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Kamalā, the goddess of wealth.[26] Rammohun himself recognized, as we shall see, that the Cornwallis system was a milestone in the social and economic history of Bengal.[27]

The *bhadraloks* were a new social class, a *de facto* social group, having no legal or religious sanction. The members of the class had similar social and political interests, and largely shared a style of life. They were not a purely economic class, for there were poor *bhadraloks* as well. This class lacked the cohesion of its Western counterpart. It was heterogeneous in origin, consisting of many castes such as brāhmaṇas, kāyasthas, vaidyas, subarnavaniks and gandhavaniks. These castes were important in the traditional society, either because they were rich, as in the case of the subarnavaniks or because they had a very high ritual status as in the case of the brāhmaṇas. But their position was more or less fixed within a social pyramid which was comparatively stable, and the interrelationship between the castes was determined by custom and *śāstric* law. Thus rules regarding food, interdining, marriage and inheritance were determined by customs which were theoretically unchangeable. In the early 19th century the inter-caste relationship was undergoing a profound change, especially in Calcutta. In this city the taboos regarding food and pollution could not be enforced rigidly, as the brāhmaṇas had to share the civic amenities with other castes often living in the same street. Although the brāhmaṇas retained their high ritual position, they had to share their social and economic power with other castes who were *bhadraloks*. It was more important to be a *bhadralok* than to be a brāhmaṇa.

In the twenties of the 19th century Calcutta was notorious in the eyes of rural Bengal; it was thought that the inhabitants of the city did not observe the caste rules and the brāhmaṇas were not necessarily recognized as social leaders (*dalapati*). According to Bhavanicharan Banerjee,[28] the Calcutta *bhadra-*

26. Bhavanicharan Banerjee, *Kalikātā Kamalālaya* [in Bengali], (Reprint, Calcutta, 1343, Bengali era), p. 4.

27. R. Roy, *Petitions against the Press Regulations, The English Works*, pt. iv, 4.

28. Op. cit., pp. 28-34.

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loks were divided into factions (*dals*) which were involved in unending feuds (*dalādali*). The *dals* were ephemeral groups formed by men from various castes under the protection of a rich man who could come from any caste, and the brāhmaṇas of Calcutta accepted the leadership of even the low caste śūdras.

The ritual position of the brāhmaṇas was also challenged. In 1832 Dharma Sabhā, an association established by the orthodox party, called a special meeting where the Bengali pandits debated a crucial question concerning the śūdra-brāhmaṇa relationship. They were asked to find out whether the *śāstras* permitted a śūdra, if he was a Vaiṣṇava, to claim reverence from the brāhmaṇas and whether the brāhmaṇas were permitted to eat such a śūdra's *prasāda* (leavings of food taken by superior). The debate followed a correspondence between Motilal Seal, a rich subarnavanik, and Banerjee, then secretary of the Dharma Sabhā. Later, Seal published the correspondence together with the *vyavasthā* of the pandits in a pamphlet called *Biprabhakti Candrikā* and distributed 500 copies gratis among his friends in Calcutta. According to the pandits' *vyavasthā* a brāhmaṇa should always command respect from a śūdra, and under no circumstances should a brāhmaṇa eat a śūdra's *prasāda*.[29] This view, however, did not go unchallenged. Later that year another pamphlet, *Śrī Śrī Vaiṣṇava Bhakti Kaumadī*[30] was published in Bengali by Bhaira (va) Chandra Dutta, a rich subarnavanik. In it Dutta argued that a śūdra who is aware of his śūdrahood but chants the name of Viṣṇu and performs all religious duties could command respect from the brāhmaṇas (*brāhmaṇer praṇāmya*).[31] Thus by the beginning of the 19th century there arose owing primarily to the economic changes but partly also to the change in administration a class of people who adopted a system of law and government, consciously designed to anglicize India.[32] However, despite the optimism of *Bangadoot*, the *bhadralok* class was an

29. *Biprabhakti Candrikā* as reprinted in Bengali.
30. Reprinted in N. N. Law, op. cit., pp. 50, 64.
31. Op. cit., pp. 54-55.
32. E. Stokes, *English Utilitarians in India* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 1-47.

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ineffective political and economic force as it was a numerically small amorphous group consisting of many castes.

Caste as a hierarchical system was becoming irrelevant in Calcutta. The ritual superiority and social leadership of the brāhmaṇas were under cloud. But caste as an endogamous group with strict laws concerning marriage and inheritance remained in full force. As we probe deeper we begin to realize the complexity of the situation. On the one hand a new class had emerged searching for new ideas, a new code of behaviour and striving for social and political advancement. It fought for a new system of education, security of landed property, free Press, trial by jury, irrespective of caste, race and creed, and for Indian participation in the Government of India. It used modern techniques such as Press, public meetings and signature campaigns to propagate its views. On the other hand traditional ideas and institutions continued to exist and in some cases reinforced their position by using modern techniques of communications and agitations. Many bitter battles between the so-called conservatives and the so-called reformers were in reality quarrels of the old society fought in a new form. Thus it is possible to look upon Rammohun as a champion of tantric views[33] who waged an ideological battle against the Vaiṣṇavas. Significantly, many conservatives such as Radhakanta Deb and Motilal Seal were Vaiṣṇavas.[34] We could also look upon Rammohun as the last prophet of the Indo-Islamic syncretic movement carrying on the tradition of Kabīr, Dara Shikoh and many others.

Rammohun came from a Rāḍī Kulīna brāhmaṇa family, who traditionally held since the days of Vallāla Sena a very high, if not the highest, social status in the caste hierarchy of Bengal.[35] Despite the social upheaval many of them managed to retain their position and during the 19th century played a leading role in Bengali society. Many outstanding writers, social and religious

33. For a study of the tantric influence on Rammohun see B. Mukherji, "Raja Rammohun Ray o Tantra Sastra" in *Vividha Prabandha*, pt. i (Chinsura, 1327, Bengali era), 143-49.

34. N. N. Law, op. cit., p. 26.

35. N. N. Vasu, *Banger Jātiya Itihās, Brāhmaṇa Kāṇḍa* (Calcutta, 1321, Bengali era), pp. 114, 134.

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reformers and politicians came from this caste. In fact four great Bengālis, Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Surendranath Banerjee and Ranglal Banerjee descended from three branches of the same Bando-Ghati family.[36]

Since two great social reformers, Raja Rammohun Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, came from the Rāḍī Kulīna caste, Binoy Ghosh[37] argues that the social reforms were inaugurated not only to enhance the social and economic position of the new middle classes but also to safeguard the interests of the Rāḍī Kulīna caste. There is some force in Ghosh's arguments. The strict laws of endogamy, prohibition of widow remarriage and polygamy left many Rāḍī Kulīna brāhmaṇa women childless, and consequently the caste was losing in number. A 17th century Bengali poet prophesied that if the strict laws of endogamy and pollution continued, the Kulīnas would soon disappear.[38] It seems that the social reforms concerning *satī*, widow remarriage and polygamy aimed at increasing the birth rate.

It is significant that the majority of the members of Rammohun's Ātmīya Sabhā belonged to Rāḍī Kulīna or Bhagṇa Kulīna caste,[39] whereas the leading figures of the orthodox Dharma Sabhā came from the kāyastha or subarnavanik caste. Only two out of 12 members of the Dharma Sabhā committee were brāhmaṇas.[40] Thus caste conflict was fused with ideological and class conflict. If contemporary Indian politics is expressed largely through two idioms, modern and traditional,[41] a beginning

36. Pandit Lalmohan Vidyanidhi, *Sambandha Nirṇaya*, i (Calcutta, 1874), Appendix. Cf. N. N. Vasu, op. cit., p. 256.

37. *Vidyāsāgar o Bāngāli Samaj* [in Bengali], i 2nd edn (Calcutta 1371, Bengali era), pp. 74-76.

38. Ibid. pp. 68-69.

39. It is not possible to determine the exact number of people associated with Rammohun's Ātmīya Sabhā, but it appears from the contemporary newspapers such as *Samachar Darpan, Calcutta Gazette, Christian Reform*, and *Tattvabodhini Patrika* that while Rammohun was successful in bringing together men from various castes and creeds, the majority of his followers were Banerjees or Mukherjees and other Rāḍī Kulīna brāhmaṇas.

40. *Samachar Darpan*, 23 January 1830, as published in B. N. Banerjee, op. cit., i, 300-02.

41. W. H. Morris-Jones, "Indian Political Idioms" in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Politics and Society in India* (London, 1963), pp. 133-54.

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had already been made in the twenties of the 19th century in Calcutta. The traditional ideas and institutions, instead of dying out, were adapted to changing situation and strengthened in the process. Although the caste system was shaken, caste remained a machinery through which political, social and economic battles could be waged. This was particularly true of the kāyasthas and subarnavaniks in the latter half of the 19th century and of the other low castes during the 20th century. But we must pay equal attention to the growth of a new class which cut across caste barriers. This development could be comparatively easily understood with a Western model, since it was similar to the changes brought about by the rise of capitalism in Europe. Caste conflicts meant change from a customary and status society to a market and competitive society.[42]

The strength of Rammohun's model lies in its being based on social reality, his awareness of the growth of a market, the rise of a new class and a competitive society. The weakness of his model lies in his failure to realize the importance of some of the traditional institutions in India and their adaptability to the changing situation.

If Rammohun was the inaugurator of a "moral revolution", of an era of investigation and inquiry, he also helped to establish the concept of freedom and equality. To do this he had to reinterpret the classical religious texts and re-establish what he considered the "true religion". Rammohun claimed that wherever he had travelled he found people believing in the existence of "One Being", who is "the source of creation and the Governor

42. E. R. Leach (ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and Northwest Pakistan Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology*, no. 2 (Cambridge, 1960), 4-9. In his introduction Leach argues that "If a whole caste group plays the role of a political faction by competing with other such factions for some common economic or political goal it hereby acts in defiance of caste tradition" (p. 6). Agreeing with this view one would suggest that it was the market economy which introduced the element of competition into what was by C. B. Macpherson's definition essentially a "customary society", *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 49-51. For a divergent view of the caste society see M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India* (Bombay, 1962), p. 7.

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of it".[43] The "One Being" is Supreme and beyond "our powers of comprehension and description".[44] It is only "men of uncultivated minds" who choose to adore something which they can "always see" and "pretend to feel".[45] God cannot be worshipped in this manner, for He is beyond human perception (*atindriya*) and boundless (*aparimita*). No image made by man can describe Him.[46] He is omnipresent, yet beyond human reason and imagination. It is in the "nature" of men to agree to the existence of the "One Supreme Being". But men disagree in "giving peculiar attributes to that Being".[47] This is so because of habit[48] acquired through tradition. But nothing should be accepted without critical examination just because it is handed down by *tawatar* (tradition) and preached by *mujtahids*, brāhmaṇas or missionaries. He argued that it is this faculty of reason which differentiates men from other animals.[49] In all organized religions, he complained:

> ... hundreds of useless hardships and privations regarding eating and drinking, purity and impurity, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness etc. have been added and thus they have been causes of injury and detrimental to social life and sources of trouble and bewilderment to the people, instead of tending to the amelioration of the condition of society.[50]

The shackles of "habit and training" have made the individuals "blind and deaf notwithstanding their having eyes and ears". But there is always an innate faculty existing in the nature of mankind; so "in case any person of sound mind...makes an enquiry

43. R. Roy, *Tuhfatul Muwahhiddin or a Gift to Deists* (ed. and tr. by Moulavi Obaidullah Obaide (Reprint, Calcutta, 1949), Introduction

44. Ibid. p. 5.

45. Cf. Rammohun's translation of an abridgement of the Vedānta as published in *The English Works*, pt. ii, 60.

46. R. Roy, "The Bengali Translation of the Vedānta", in *Rāmmohan Granthāvalī*, pt. i (ed. by B. N. Banerjee and S. K. Das, Calcutta n.d.), 4-7.

47. R. Roy, *Tuhfatul*, p. 1.

48. Ibid. pp. 1-2, 4.

49. R Roy, "The Bengali Translation of the Vedānta", *Rāmmohan Granthāvalī*, pt. i, 5.

50. R. Roy, *Tuhfatul*, p. 5.

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...there is strong hope that he will be able to distinguish the truth from untruth and...[of his] becoming free from the useless restraints of religions".[51]

By separating God from "habit and training" and from organized religions and by putting Him beyond reason, Rammohun allowed reason to rule supreme over worldly matters and opened the possibilities of "boundless improvement" of the individuals in intellectual, moral and social fields. He insisted that there is no necessity for "intermediate agencies" such as "prophets or revelation" for guidance in attaining spiritual salvation.[52] He preferred *ātmasākṣātkāra* (direct meeting) to *upāsanāparamparā* (mode of worship handed down from the ancestors).[53] He argued with Mrityunjaya Vidyalankar that it was possible to reach Brahma without observing the rules of the *varṇāśramadharma*. By this he did not mean asceticism. He showed that such great men as Vasiṣṭha, Parāśara, Vyāsa and Janaka, although great believers in the omnipresent God according to the doctrine of the Vedānta (*brahmaniṣṭha*), were also householders (*gṛhastha*) and zealous in "worldly affairs" and "politics".[54] So it is possible to pursue "worldly affairs" without any hindrance to spiritual salvation. To Rammohun faith in one God (who is beyond reason) was inseparably connected with his faith in individual freedom. Man must be free to pursue his "worldly affairs" without any "useless religious restraints" and with faith in omnipresent God. Most of his Bengali pamphlets ridiculed all religious taboos concerning caste, food, marriage and worship. In these he pleaded that the śūdras must be permitted to read the Vedānta in translation,[55] brāhmaṇas and kāyasthas should be allowed to drink and eat meat,[56] and taboos concerning food had no relevance to "true religion". He further

51. Ibid. p. 7.

52. Ibid. p. 16.

53. R. Roy, "Bhattācaryer Sahit Bicār" in *Rāmmohan Granthāvalī*, pt. i, 177.

54. Ibid. p. 161; cf *Īśopaniṣad* in *Rāmmohan Granthāvalī*, pt. i, 199-201.

55. R. Roy, "Goswāmir Sahit Bicār" in *Rāmmohan Granthāvalī*, pt. ii, 47-48.

56. R. Roy, "Kāyastheı Sahit Madyapāner Bicār" in *Rāmmohan Granthāvalī*, pt. vi, 183-84.

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argued that a brāhmaṇa should not be considered a brāhmaṇa simply because of his *jāti* or varṇa;[57] he must also be a *brahmaniṣṭha*. He pleaded that the Śaiva wedding rites, which permitted inter-caste and inter-communal marriage, should have the same sanction as the Vedic rites.[58] All taboos concerning food and inter-caste relationship were against the social and economic progress of the Bengali *bhadraloks*.[59]

Faith in God also helped to establish equality among all human beings. All men "equally enjoy" or "suffer" "the pleasures or inconveniences of nature".[60]

> This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notions of God, who has equally subjected all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or wealth...and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which He has lavished over nature.[61]

Women are also equally subject to God and blessed with an innate quality to make "boundless improvement" in moral and intellectual fields. In his passionate plea against burning widows alive he made out a case for the freedom of women:

> Women are in general inferior to men in bodily strength and energy; consequently the male part of the community, taking advantage of their corporal weakness, has denied to them those excellent merits that they are entitled to by nature.[62]

Women are not inferior to men in any other way. If they did not have to live as "a slave in the house" and were allowed to have

57. R. Roy, "Cariprasner Uttar", *Rāmmohan Granthāvalī*, pt. v, 44-48.

58. Ibid. pt. vi, 19-20. Cf. "Eathya Pradan", *Rammohan Granthāvalī*, pt. vi, 179-80.

59. R. Roy, "Translation of the Kena Upanishad, One of the Chapters of the Sama Veda", *The English Works*, pt. ii, 14f.

60. R. Roy, *Tuhfatul*, p. 7.

61. R. Roy, "The Precepts of Jesus. The Guide of Peace and Happiness", *The English Works*, pt. v, 4.

62. R. Roy, "A Second Conference between an Advocate for and an Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows Alive", *The English Works*, pt. iii, 125.

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proper instruction in knowledge and wisdom they would be able "to exhibit their natural capacity".[63]

The civil society of Rammohun consisted of free individuals united in the worship of one true God. Unity was important to Rammohun, who felt that polytheism and image worship only perpetuated the differences between creeds and castes, while faith in "One Being", who is "the fountain of the harmonious organization of the universe",[64] creates a bond which held them together. Its relevance to the amorphous and weak *bhadralok* class was also beyond dispute.

Thus Rammohun's faith in one God was part and parcel of his social and political philosophy. To him religion was "the basis of society". As he stated :

> Although it is a fact and cannot be denied that as mankind are naturally social beings, they are required to live together socially; but as society depends upon individuals' understanding the ideas of each other reciprocally and on existence of some rules by which the property of one is to be defined and distinguished from that of another, and one is to be prevented from exercising oppression over another, so all races inhabiting different countries, even the inhabitants of isolated islands and summits of lofty mountains, have invented special words indicating certain ideas, which form the basis of the invention of religion, and upon which organization of society depends.[65]

He favoured change in "their [Indians'] religions, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort".[66] When *satī* was abolished he wrote to one of his friends in England that since the Act had "removed the odium from our character as a people...we now deserve every improvement, temporal and spiritual".[67]

The religious reforms of Rammohun aimed at freeing the indi-

63. Ibid. pp. 125-26.
64. R. Roy, *Tuhfatul*, p. 6.
65. Ibid. p. 7.
66. Letter to a friend, 18 January 1828, as published in *The English Works*, pt. iv, 95-96.
67. Letter to a friend, 14 July 1832, as published in "Notes on the *suttee* and Its Abolition", in Binoy Ghosh, *Report of Regional Records Survey Committee of West Bengal 1958-59* (Calcutta, 1959).

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viduals from "restraints" imposed upon them by religion. These "restraints", he believed, denied the Indians "social comfort" and disqualified them from entering into difficult economic enterprises.[68] Thus the freedom of the individual was not an end in itself; rather it was a means to encourage economic prosperity. To Rammohun, as to the English liberal philosophers, freedom (or as he often called it "independence of character") was inseparably related to reason and wealth. Man is free so long as he is rational and owner of his person and capacities. Rammohun claimed that women in Bengal had lost their freedom largely because they had been deprived of their ancient right of inheritance by the "modern expounders of law". In his view ancient lawgivers unanimously allowed a mother an equal share with her son in the property left by her deceased husband, in order that she may spend her remaining days independently of her children.[69] But the "modern expounders" had deprived women of right to property; consequently they had no freedom and were entirely dependent on the will of sons and other relations.[70] Such women, after the death of their husbands, were left to choose from "three modes of conduct": (a) "To live a miserable life as entire slaves to others, without indulging any hope of support from another husband"; or (b) "To walk in the paths of unrighteousness for their maintenance and independence"; or (c) "To die on the funeral pile of their husbands, loaded with the applause and honour of their neighbours".[71] Independent means to support oneself being an essential qualification of freedom, an unrighteous woman maintaining herself, he believed, had more freedom than a virtuous widow.

From a "careful survey and observation of the people and inhabitants of various parts of the country", Rammohun claimed to have found two classes of "inhabitants of the cities, towns or stations". He distinguished these classes from the rural classes who live in "primitive simplicity".[72] The "inhabitants of the cities",

68. Extract from a letter, 18 January 1828, as published in *The English Works*, pt. iv, 95.
69. *The English Works*, pt. i, 1.
70. Ibid. p. 3.
71. Ibid. p. 5.
72. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 64.

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whose "religious opinions are shaken", who have "no sufficient means to enter into commerce or business", nor any prospect of bettering their condition "by the savings of honest industry",[73] are on the whole dishonest and have no "independence of character". However, even among such inhabitants he found many "men of real merit, worth and character";[74] but they were those who were "engaged in respectable line of trade". Thus "independence of character" was related to the "respectable line of trade". It is the native officers "of trifling salaries" who might not be independent and therefore tempted to use "their official influence to promote their own interests".[75] He also insisted that "natives of respectability" should be appointed as collectors "in lieu of Europeans". But such a native's worth, character and responsibility depended upon his ability to provide "sureties" of such amount as the "government may deem adequate".[76]

Rammohun's concept of individual freedom thus implied a class society, consisting of the enlightened free owners and the superstitious dependent multitude. All men are equal in the eyes of God and endowed with the innate quality to free themselves from "the useless restraints of religion" and make "boundless improvement" in intellectual, moral and social fields. In practice, however, only a few are not "fettered with prejudices", and being aware of "true doctrines", have acquired "the dignity of human beings".[77] The masses on the other hand blindly follow the superstitious rituals. In Calcutta only the members of his Ātmīya Sabhā, Rammohun thought, were able to acquire such "dignity of human beings", and had risen above the ignorant masses. He found a similar situation everywhere; in England "there is no resemblance between the higher and educated classes and the lower classes".[78] Such a class society, he maintained, was implicit in the Vedas, the tantras and the Purāṇas, which introduced a plurality of gods and goddesses for the sake of those whose "limited understandings"

73. Ibid. pp. 64-65.
74. Ibid. p. 65.
75. Ibid. p. 16.
76. Ibid. p. 60.
77. *The English Works*, pt. ii, 23.
78. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 51.

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rendered them incapable of comprehending and adoring the invisible Supreme Being, so that such persons might not remain "in a brutified state, destitute of all religious principles".[79] Just as the Vedāntic religion is for the enlightened few, a market conduces to the greater prosperity of those who are more rational and skilful than others. Rammohun pleaded for the Europeans being encouraged to settle in India, but these should include only "persons of character and capital". He was willing to shut the doors against "persons of lower classes"[80] and include rich merchants and *zamīndārs*—"respectable and intelligible classes"—in the political system under the British government in India. He apparently accepted two contradictory concepts, equality and class society, without being conscious of it. He fervently hoped that through divine providence and human exertions "the masses in India" will sooner or later avail themselves of that true system of religion and gain independence of mind.[81] A competitive market, he thought, would open opportunities for everyone to "gain independence by honest means".[82]

Rammohun viewed education as a channel through which the individuals could free themselves from the "fetters of prejudices". He opposed the establishment of the Sanskrit College in 1823, for such a "seminary [similar in character to those existing in Europe before the time of Lord Bacon] can only be expected to load the minds of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practicable use to the possessors or to society".[83] He was not against teaching Sanskrit language as such because Sanskrit works contain much valuable information. But he was in favour of encouraging the teaching of Sanskrit by granting allowances to "those most eminent professors, who have already undertaken on their own account to teach them, and would by such rewards be stimulated to still greater exertions".[84]

79. *The English Works*, pt. ii, 14.
80. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 51.
81. *The Engilsh Works*, pt. ii, 23-24.
82. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 49-50, 63-68.
83. R. Roy's letter to Lord Amherst on Western education as reprinted in Biswas and Ganguli (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohan Roy*, p. 453.
84. Ibid. pp. 458-59

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He wisned the government to spend more money allocated for education to "instruct" the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences, which the nations of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection that has "raised them above the inhabitants of other parts of the world".[85] The Sanskrit system of education, controlled by "speculative men", he believed, would keep the "entire country in darkness". Britain escaped such a fate since "the Baconian philosophy" was allowed "to displace the system of the schoolmen".[86] It was not the Sanskrit learning itself which worried him but the "speculative system" which, he thought, would not allow individuals to free themselves "from fetters of prejudice" and learn "useful sciences"

Rammohun looked upon the market as another agency through which the individuals could improve their economic position and "gain independence". In a free competitive market society land, human labour and other resources being owned by individuals are legally alienable. Rammohun opposed any change in the legal system of inheritance and proprietorship in Bengal, for the *dāyabhāga* system had given individuals "the power to alienate" their property, "acquired" or "ancestral", at their free will. They did not need to have the consent or sanction of their family, community or authorities to dispose of their property. This right of the individuals had been handed down from the traditional society and the British law courts had accepted it. Under the system anyone possessed of landed property, whether self-acquired or ancestral, had been able to procure easily, on the credit of that property, loans of money to lay out on the improvement of his estate, in trade or in manufactures, whereby he "enriches himself and his family and benefits the country".[87]

Rammohun insisted that law must be independent of morality. Many acts such as selling intoxicating drugs and spirits and giving a daughter in marriage to an unworthy man are immoral, but they are not invalid in the eyes of law. There are, however, some immoral acts which are also illegal, for example, the execution of a

85. Ibid. p. 458.
86. Ibid. p. 460.
87. *The English Works*, pt i, 19.

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deed on a sabbath day. A line has to be drawn between those immoral acts which should not be considered invalid and those which should be regarded null and void in law.[88] The line of distinction should be drawn according to the common law and established usages of every country. Thus a father may be charged with breach of religious duty if he sells or gives away ancestral property at his own discretion. He should not be subjected to the pain of finding his act nullified; nor the purchaser punished with forfeiture of his acquisition. Rammohun cited Jīmūtavāhana to show that if a man should sell the whole of the inherited estate without the consent of his family for its maintenance or for self-preservation, he does not commit "even a moral offence", for "a man should always preserve himself".[89] Thus a man must have complete legal right of ownership over land and other resources without any moral restraints.

If new laws were to be introduced to incapacitate individuals to dispose of their property freely, Rammohun argued, a great majority of the property owners would lose credit, fall back on the savings from their income and be forced to curtail their establishments, which could "impede the progress of foreign and domestic commerce". He asked: "Is there any good policy in reducing the native of Bengal to that degree of poverty which has fallen upon a great part of the upper provinces, owing in some measure to the wretched restrictions laid down in the *Mitākṣarā*, their standard law of inheritance?"[90] Thus progress in trade and commerce and the prosperity of the whole community are dependent on the recognition of the individual as the complete owner of all resources, with the legal right to alienate, sell or dispose of his property without moral restraints and free from the wills of others.

Rammohun strongly pleaded for a clear definition and strict observance of the contracts between individuals in a market economy, for this provides the security which encourages individuals to maximize their abilities. The Cornwallis system had given the landed class in Bengal such security. He claimed that since 1793,

88. Ibid. pp. 31-32.
89. Ibid. p. 33.
90. Ibid. p. 19.

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after the Permanent Settlement, the landholders of Bengal had placed their entire reliance on the promises made by the British government, and by constantly improving their estates "been able to increase their produce in general very considerably".[91]

Faith in government by law was, according to Rammohun, the main difference between the system of government established by Cornwallis and that of the Mughals. Although "lands in India were individual property in ancient time",[92] and even under the Muslim rule (when the right to property had been violated) lands were held by "hereditary Zemindary system",[93] there was an uncertainty regarding the assessment of revenue and no security of property. The relations between the state and the proprietors were not clearly defined nor the terms strictly observed. The ruler could unilaterally and arbitrarily augment or reduce the rates of revenue and deprive the landholders of "their rights as proprietors".[94] The Cornwallis system relieved the landlords from the "distress and difficulties originating in the uncertainty of assessment". A "perpetual settlement was concluded" between the government and proprietors[95] and the terms of contracts were clearly defined and observed. This proved beneficial to all the parties concerned. The *zamīndārs* improved their estates, raised their prices by augmenting rent and brought about a general prosperity, while the government fetched a large sum in the form of land revenue. Rammohun showed that the government income from land revenue in Bengal during the period 1817-28 rose by 30 per cent, whereas in Madras, where the *ryotwari* system prevailed, land revenue actually decreased by more than 2 per cent during the same period.[96] Economic security was the most important reason why the Indians were so firmly attached to the British government. As he stated :

> Although under the British Rule, the natives of India have entirely lost their political consequence [power and rank],

91. *The English Works*, pt. iv, 4.
92. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 40-41.
93. Ibid. p. 39.
94. Ibid. p. 57.
95. Ibid. pp. 57-58.
96. Ibid. pp. 70-71.

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they considered themselves much happier in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty than were their ancestors.[97]

Civic liberties concerning land ownership and free trade were decisive factors in this respect. Rammohun admitted that men of such "ancient families" as were reduced by the British government were "decidedly disaffected to it", but referred to others who being "engaged prosperously in commerce", or secure in the peaceful possession of their estates by the Permanent Settlement, or having sufficient intelligence to foresee the probability of future improvement under British rule, "are not only reconciled to it, but really view it as a blessing to the country".[98]

Rammohun, however, was not fully satisfied with the Cornwallis system, which was far from perfect and had room for improvement in it. If the cultivators in Madras were subjected to the "extortions and intrigues" of "the surveyors and other government officers", in Bengal they were at the mercy of the *zamīndārs*.[99] There was no chance for them to improve their position, since their rights being not clearly defined there were no contractual relations between them and the *zamīndārs*. The landlords could augment rent at their will and depose the cultivators from their traditional hereditary right to cultivate land. Rammohun wanted a perpetual settlement between the cultivators and landlords, like the one Cornwallis had drawn up for the government and landlords. He was at a loss to conceive why "this indulgence was not extended to their tenants" by requiring proprietors to follow the example of the government in fixing a definite rent to be received from each cultivator, "according to the average sum actually collected from him during a given term of years".[100] This would give the cultivators the necessary security to improve their lands and an opportunity to accumulate capital. He insisted that the sales of landed estates must be fairly conducted. All the parties interested in purchasing them should receive notices of sales, which must be fixed in public places such as markets, ferries, government offices, etc., in Calcutta, Patna, Murshidabad,

97. *The English Works*, pt. iv, 27.
98. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 67.
99. Ibid. p. 45.
100. Ibid. p. 58.

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Benares and Cawnpore. The police officers should be required to take care that the notices remain fixed in all those places from the first announcement till the period of sale. The day and hour of sale must be precisely fixed and biddings allowed to go on for a specific period so that all the intending purchasers have opportunity to make an offer.[101]

To Rammohun the chief function of the state was to protect the life, religion and property of the individuals. For this reason the sovereign in a state must have power to enforce law and order. He argued that since 1712 until the emergence of the Company as a political power there was no effective political force in India.[102] Akbar II, the last but one "representative of the imperial throne of Timur", enjoyed only the empty title of "King of Delhi"[103] "without royal prerogative or power". Ranjit Singh's power was confined to north-western India only.[104] The new middle classes were no doubt a significant social and economic force in Bengal, but they lacked cohesion to become an effective political force and had no influence outside the province. The British were in the circumstances the only effective political force in the country and, what was more important, had used that position to maintain orderly relations of exchange and to protect the "lives, religion and property" of the individuals. It was also in British India that "the literary and political improvements" were "continuously going on". But he emphatically asserted that sovereignty must not be in the office of the Governor-General or his subordinate officers but in King-in-Parliament, who was "the supreme legislative power in the country".[105]

Laws, however, according to Rammohun, should not be arbitrarily enacted. They must give due weight to the customs of the country and be "reasonable", though no custom was sacrosanct just because it was ancient. In his words:

> I agree in the first assertion, that certain writings received by Hindus as sacred, are the origin of the Hindu law of inheritance, but with this modification that the writings are

101. Ibid. pp. 44-45.
102. Ibid. pp. 5-7.
103. Ibid. p. 6.
104. Ibid. pp. 5-6.
105. *The English Works*, pt. iv, 25.

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supposed sacred only when consistent with sound reasoning.[106]

In his view the Hindus of Bengal had accepted the rules laid down by the author of *dāyabhāga* knowing that they committed a sin by withholding "blind submission" to the authority of one group of saints and showing preference to another, because they found such laws "reasonable and calculated to promote their interest".[107] This was so in every country, and the rules determining the rights of succession and alienation of property "first originated either in the conventional choice of the people or in the discretion of the highest authority, secular or spiritual, and these rules have been subsequently established by the common usages of the country and confirmed by judicial proceedings".[108] He wanted the British government to accept such usages as law. But unjust laws and rules which are against reason and bring "social discomfort" must be changed. Pleading for a change in law regarding the position of the cultivators, Rammohun claimed that an "unjust precedent and practice. even of longer standing, cannot be considered as the standard of justice by an enlightened government".[109] In fact, he argued, men are justified in opposing any system, religious, domestic or political, "which is inimical to the happiness of society".[110] So good laws should both follow the dictates of reason and conform to customs, which are the result of historical experience.

Rammohun projected his model to ancient India. In the ideal society men followed the "doctrines of true religion",[111] adored the Supreme Being and lived under a just and efficient government, enjoying freedom. Even women in ancient India had property rights and enjoyed independence. The government followed rather strictly the norms of the separation of powers. The brāhmaṇas were the legislators of the community, while the

106. *The English Works*, pt. i, 20.
107. Ibid. p. 22.
108. Ibid. pp. 17-18.
109. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 58.
110. *The English Works*, pt. ii, 137-38.
111. Letter to Woodford, 22 August 1883, as published in *The English Works*, pt. iv, 93.

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kṣatriyas wielded executive power.[112] Rammohun thought that the system of absolute rule came to India when the brāhmaṇas started accepting employment in "political departments", became "nominal legislators" under the Rajputs (kṣatriyas) and the real power, whether legislative or executive, came to be exercised by the latter.[113] The Rajputs exercised "tyranny and oppression for a thousand years, when the Musulmans from Ghuznee and Ghore invaded the country . . .and introduced their own tyrannical system of government".[114] Such uncontrolled power must not be allowed to rise again in India. No doubt, he read back some of the Whig principles into Indian history, but some "historical experiences" were true; under the old regime the uncontrolled power exercised by the Mughal officers neither encouraged trade nor provided security of property.

In 1823 Rammohun attacked John Adam's rather hasty regulation, which restricted the freedom of the Press. He was disturbed by the regulation, not only because it tampered with the civil rights but also because by enacting such a regulation the local executive authority had "suddenly assumed the power of legislation".[115] The supreme legislative body in India, in his view, being the King-in-Parliament and the officers being only the executive branch, the British government must prohibit any authority "in this country from assuming the legislative power".[116] To him John Adam's regulation was not merely an isolated attack on free Press, but also an example of the "abuse of uncontrolled power",[117] the end of the principle of the separation of powers and of civil liberty.

Rammohun strongly advocated the separation of powers even at the lower level of administration. He regretted:

> . . .many collectors are even invested with the additional office and powers of magistrates contrary to the judicious system established by Lord Cornwallis, and to the common principles of justice, as they thus become at once parties

112. *The English Works*, pt. i, 1 fn.
113. Ibid.
114. Ibid.
115. *The English Works*, pt. iv, 11.
116. Ibid. pp. 30-31.
117. Ibid. p. 30.

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> and judges in their own case; consequently, such powers very often prove injurious to those who attempt to maintain their own rights against the claims of government whose agents the collectors are.[118]

He was willing to go to the logical end and separate the office of the judge from that of the magistrate.

Rammohun fought for the "freedom of Press" not because this was an "ancient birth right" but because he considered a free Press essential for the social and economic progress of the community, diffusion of knowledge and efficient and just government. The restrictions on the Press, he believed, would preclude the natives from communicating "frankly and honestly" to their gracious sovereign in England and his council the real condition of his Majesty's faithful subjects in "this distant part of his dominions" and the treatment they experienced from the local government. The free Press on the other hand would exercise restraint on the local executive which had absolute power over all the citizens. It would also act as a mirror of public opinion and acquaint the local government with the feelings of its subjects on various government policies. He credited the free Press in Bengal with encouraging "free discussion", which had "served greatly to improve their (Bengalis') minds and ameliorate their condition".[119] One of the obstacles to the efficient administration of justice in India, he thought, was the lack of publicity of the "judicial proceedings by means of the Press", which could act as a watch-dog over the working of the courts of law.

To improve the quality of judicial administration Rammohun recommended the codification of the criminal and civil law and the publication of the two codes in Indian languages to familiarize the community with the law of the country.[120] In the Benthamite fashion he argued that the code of criminal law ought to be "simple in its principles, clear in its arrangement and precise in its definitions, so that it may be established as a standard of criminal justice in itself".[121] However, he was aware that such

118. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 50.
119. *The English Works*, pt. iv, 6-9, 27-31.
120. *The English Works*, pt. iii, 32-33.
121. Ibid.

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a code could not be based on some "universal principles"; instead it had to conform to the customs of the country.[122] He was happy that "the criminal law now established in India has been judiciously founded on Mohammedan criminal law".[123] He also realized that uniformity in civil law could not be achieved until the whole community was prepared "by the diffusion of intelligence".[124]

Rammohun made a number of suggestions for good government and the political improvement of the "enlightened" and "respectable" classes of Bengal. He wanted every new project of law, before its final adoption by the government, to be printed and copies of it sent to the "principal zamindars", "highly respectable merchants", *muftis* of the *Sadar Diwani Adalat* and the head native officers of the Boards of Revenue "for their opinion on each clause of Regulation", which they should send in writing to the government within a certain period.[125] The government need not be guided by their suggestions, but a copy of the minutes made by *zamīndārs* and others should be sent to England for the consideration of the Court of Directors and Parliament, and there should be a standing committee of the House of Commons to take the whole Regulations and Minutes into consideration, and report to the House from time to time on the subject for their confirmation or amendment.[126] He argued that this would not confer upon the *zamīndārs* and merchants any political power, but get them interested in the government.

Rammohun aimed at combining "the knowledge and experience of the native" with "the dignity and firmness of the European" in all branches of administration.[127] He asserted that the Indians had "the same capability of improvement as any civilized people".[128] For economy and better relationship between the governors and the governed the Indians of "character and capital" should be encouraged to take responsible posts with higher salaries, in all branches of administration. The chief criterion for such

122. Ibid.
123. Ibid. p. 31.
124. Ibid. p. 35.
125. Ibid. pp. 35-36
126. Ibid.
127. Ibid. p. 17.
128. Ibid. p. 66.

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appointments should be the "independence of character". All British subjects should be treated as members of one great family without showing "an invidious preference to any particular tribe or sect", but giving fair and equal encouragement to the "worthy and intelligent under whatever denomination they may be found".[129] But if the government should pursue an opposite course there would be "religious jealousy", spirit of domination and revenge. Hence the government should encourage a "community of feeling", not exclude the Hindus and Muslims from acting as jurors in the trial of the Christians and make the Indians eligible to all offices including those of the justices of peace.[130]

Rammohun's concept of individual freedom was much more complex than is generally recognized. It meant freedom from the "fetters of prejudice", "useless religious restraints", "social discomforts", religious persecution, arbitrary taxation and insecurity of property. It also meant freedom to acquire and use knowledge for material improvement, to engage in economic enterprises without moral or other restraints and freedom of movement.[131] The suggestions he made to the Select Committee in 1832 aimed at improving the local administration in India so that the individuals could enjoy such freedom.

Rammohun showed less interest in political freedom for the Indians—freedom to control the destiny of their country. He realized that the new propertied classes lacked cohesion and experience to exercise political power. Moreover, the lives and property of the individuals were well protected under British rule; no other power in India could give such protection. As he put it:

> ...though it is impossible for a thinking man not to feel the evils of political subjection and dependence on foreign people, yet when we reflect on the advantages which we have derived and may hope to derive from our connection with Great Britain, we may be reconciled to the present

129. *The English Works*, pt. iv, 38

130. Ibid. pp. 38-39.

131. Letter to Prince Talleyraud (1832), as published in B. N. Banerjee, *Rammohun Roy*, pp. 69-72.

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> state of things which promises permanent benefits to our posterity.[132]

In 1832 he pleaded with his countrymen to exercise moderation and prudence while making petitions to England for a better political deal for the Indians, as he believed that the reformed Parliament would be favourably disposed to the Indian cause.[133]

Rammohun thought that the middle classes would strengthen their position if they identified their cause with the struggle for "liberty" in other parts of the world. The debate on the Reform Bill in 1832 reflected the "struggle" not merely between the reformers and anti-reformers, but also "between liberty and tyranny throughout the world, between justice and injustice, and between right and wrong".[134] Hence he considered "the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours".[135] He took "lively interest" in the progress of South American emancipation;[136] he was a strong supporter of the liberals in Spain and Portugal and an ardent admirer of the French Revolution.[137] He supported the cause of Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform.

We have endeavoured to discover the social base of Rammohun's political ideas and seen that although his concept of individual freedom was Western in origin, it was shaped by Indian social conditions and expressed in a language comprehensible to the Indian readers. The freedom of the individual was essential for the social and economic prosperity of the new classes in India. He had the extraordinary vision to look upon the market economy and the British Raj as tools of history

132. "A Letter on Grant's Jury Bill", *India Gazette*, 22 January 1833, as reprinted in *The English Works*, pt. iv, 40.

133. Ibid. pp. 39-41.

134. Letter to Mrs Woodford, 27 April 1832, as published in *The English Works*, pt. iv, 91.

135. Letter to J. S. Buckingham, 11 August 1821, as published in *The English Works*, pt. iv, 89.

136. *Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany*, September 1821, pp. 350-57.

137. Letter to Woodford, 22 August 1832, as published in *The English Works*, pt. iv, 93; cf. Biswas and Ganguli (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy*, pp. 161-63.

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which would finally "liberate" India. But his vision was limited. He failed to see that a market economy under the colonial rule might in the long run have a limited impact on the economic growth of the country. Although he was right in thinking that the interests of the new classes were tied up with those of the British, he failed to see that the two interests would eventually clash and the middle classes would win "freedom" in every sense of the term only when they brought the masses to one political platform under the banner of nationalism.

Rammohun's concept of the freedom of the individual was inseparably tied up with rationality and ownership; the masses received somewhat lower status in civil society and were excluded from the political society. His concern for the "miseries of the agricultural peasantry of India" was also very limited.[138] He aimed at establishing a contractual relationship between the *zamīndārs* and the cultivators, so that the *khud-kāsht* ryots (cultivating one's own land) had the opportunity to improve themselves through a free market. He did not bother about the landless peasantry, wage earners and slaves;[139] nor could he foresee that free trade, settlement of the Europeans and commercialization of agriculture would bring unemployment and misery to many in rural India.[140]

Rammohun was unaware of one important aspect of the new development. He failed to see that members of Dharma Sabhā, the great stalwarts of the orthodox religion, were also governors of the Hindu College, the most important institution for the new education. They joined the School Book Society, Free School Society and Agricultural Society[141] and supported many secular causes such as the trial by jury, free Press and Indian participa-

138. S. C. Sarkar (ed.), *Rammohun Roy on Indian Economy* (Calcutta, 1965), pp. i-v.

139. Slavery was widespread in Bengal. See D. R. Banaji, *Slavery in British India*, 2nd edn (Bombay, 1933), p. 9.

140. H. R. Ghoshal, "Changes in the Organisation of Industrial Production in the Bengal Presidency during the Early Nineteenth Century", in B. N. Ganguly (ed.), *Readings in Indian Economic History* (Delhi, 1964), pp. 120-25.

141. A. F. S. Ahmed, *Social Ideas and Social Change in Bengal 1818-1835* (Leiden, 1965), pp. 21-22.

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tion in administration. It was Motilal Seal, an orthodox Vaiṣṇava, who provided Rs. 30,000 for the Calcutta Medical College.[142] Thus it was possible to enter the new economic ventures and support the new education system without abandoning the old religion, although many caste taboos, which stood in the way of economic enterprise, were dropped unceremoniously.[143]

Rammohun failed to see that it was not possible to wage battles for economic and political position through traditional social institutions such as caste. In fact he inadvertently let loose revivalism as a new force in Indian politics. He did this by insisting on religious reform and by idealizing ancient India. Revivalism enjoyed the support of the masses, as it spoke through the traditional channels, and in the long run proved to be a dynamic anti-imperialist political force. But it blocked the way to building the social order visualized by Rammohun.

However, Rammohun's importance in the history of modern Indian ideas cannot be denied. If the present-day Indian polity is still concerned with the freedom of the individual and secularism, it owes a great deal to Rammohun. Moreover, the "moral revolution" which he inaugurated eventually shook the whole society; nobody would accept the old ideas unquestioningly. The so-called "counter-reformation" was largely an indirect result of his efforts.[144] He correctly analysed the position of the middle classes in India and his weapons were to be successfully used by the Indians for their economic and political enhancement in the next half century.

Indian liberalism was a valid political force during the 19th century. This was because it had a social base of its own. The basic tenets of Indian liberalism were formulated by Rammohun from his own social experience. The new middle classes in Calcutta needed to establish the privilege of wealth and intelligence in place of the privilege of birth and rank. It suited them

142. N. N. Law, op. cit., i, 29-30.

143. For an interesting study of the caste and modern occupations see N. K. Bose, "Some Aspects of Caste in Bengal" in Milton Singer (ed.), *Traditional India: Structure and Change* (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 191-226.

144. C. F. Andrews and G. Mookerjee, *The Rise and Growth of Congress in India 1832-1920*. 2nd edn (Meerut, 1967), pp. 1-27.

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to replace the old status society by an open competitive system without losing control to the masses or to the old political authorities. Since they could not claim political control for themselves, at least during the 19th century, they depended on British support. However, society was changing rapidly and the old ideas were becoming irrelevant to the new generation in the last quarter of the century. The early nationalists and moderates tried to adjust these ideas to the changing situation and to some extent they were successful. So long as the masses were left out of the political arena and the civil society was controlled by the enlightened proprietors, Rammohun's ideas remained valid. But with the emergence of Gandhi and a mass-based political society after the first World War, these ideas lost their force. The liberals lost power to Gandhi not because they were inept politicians, but because they remained faithful to a set of ideas which had lost touch with reality.

R. H. Tawney once said that "Puritanism helped to mould the social order, but it was also itself increasingly moulded by it".[145] Rammohun's ideas changed the face of Indian society but they were themselves shaped by it.

145. *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 1948), p. xiii.

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The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism Before 1947

BIPAN CHANDRA

The relations between the Indian capitalist class and imperialism evolved during the era of the development of a powerful struggle against imperialism in India. This struggle in its different phases should not be seen in the main as a mere reflection of the contradiction between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie. It was basically a reflection of the contradiction between imperialism and all the Indian people, of whom the bourgeoisie constituted merely one important segment. Moreover, at no stage from its initiation to its later development was the capitalist class the driving element behind this struggle or its militancy.[1]

Thus the choice before the bourgeoisie was not whether to create or not to create an anti-imperialist movement or whether to push or not to push it forward. Rather, this class had to continuously, from stage to stage, determine its attitude towards an autonomously arising and develop-

1. The idea that the Indian national movement originated with the bourgeoisie is the result of the mechanical application of European history. Moreover, since at no stage did the bourgeoisie provide the main thrust of the movement, at no stage can its development be primarily explained with reference to the role of the bourgeoisie only. I certainly do not want to contribute through this paper to this tendency that warped so much of the political discussion among the Maxists from 1920 to 1948.

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ing movement which was at no stage waged under its own direct leadership. It could let the movement turn against itself by opposing it, or, by collaborating with imperialism or by remaining passive towards it, or it could harness it to its own interests by supporting it and thereby controlling its direction, methods, socio-economic programme, and organization; or in other words, confine the movement within the political and economic parameters of its own class interests. The choice that it made was, of course, not fortuitous. The possibility, indeed the necessity, of supporting the movement arose out of the class's objective relationship to imperialism and its capacity to evolve a correct relationship with the national movement so as to bring it under its own class hegemony.

It is against this historical background that the relationship of the Indian capitalist class with imperialism has to be discussed.

Another assumption may also be made explicit at this stage. The Indian capitalist class was not completely homogeneous. Consequently, there were certainly differences in the degree of development of contrad ctions between its different parts or segments and imperialism and also, therefore, were differences based on commerce and industry, finance and industry, region, and size (small, medium and monopoly). There were also purely individual differences. However, for the purpose in hand, I have taken the class as a whole, for it revealed a basic homogeneity in its economic and political relationship with imperialism. This homogeneity is revealed after 1927 in the pre-eminent position accorded by the class, as also the government, to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and to certain individuals such as Purshotamdas Thakurdas and G. D. Birla.

I

The basic hypothesis of this paper is that the Indian capitalist class had developed a long-term contradiction

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with imperialism while retaining a relationship of short-term dependence on and accommodation with it.[2]

II

From the middle of the 19th century and especially after 1914 an independent capitalist class developed in India. From the beginning it possessed one important characteristic: *in the main, it did not develop an organic link with British capitalism; it was not integrated with foreign capital in India.* This point may be spelled out further. Indian capitalists during the 20th century were not in the main middlemen between the British capitalists in Britain or India and the Indian market. Even when some of their progenitors started out from about the middle of the 19th century as traders between Britain and India or between India and the Far East, they traded on their own account, under their own financial steam, often in competition with British trading firms, and seldom as their compradors. Nor did the overwhelming majority of the Indian industrialists develop as junior partners of British entrepreneurs in India.[3] At no stage was the main body of the Indian capitalist class subordinated to foreign capital, industrial or financial.[4] Nor did the Indian industrialists depend for finance on British finance capital. In fact, Indian industrial

2. Many of the Marxist writers on the subject have described the relationship of the Indian capitalist class with imperialism as *dual* before 1947. But this does not answer the basic question: which of the dual aspects of the relationship was primary both in the long run and at specific moments? Mere recognition of the dual character of the relationship is an advance, but it does not take the analysis very far.

3. There were a few compradors and junior partners of British capital. But they were neither in the mainstream of Indian business nor important in the business and class organizations of the Indian capitalist class. They also demarcated themselves from the main body of the class by supporting imperialism in the field of politics as also of economic policies.

4. This was also true of the big (in Indian terms) bourgeoisie. But certainly the wide prevalence of small and middle capitalists in India reinforced this result.

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and finance capital developed in keen competition with British capital; and one of the major Indian complaints was the failure of British-controlled banks to finance Indian industry. This lack of collaboration was, of course, also due to the fact that the British capitalists, having their own direct and well-established administration in India, did not need an indigenous mediating class as was the case in 18th century India and in China in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The family histories of some of the leading Indian industrialists of the 20th century are quite revealing in this respect. The houses of the Tatas, the Birlas, Shri Ram, the Dalmia Jains, Vithaldas Thackersey, Walchand Hirachand, Narottam Morarjee, the Singhanias, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Ambalal Sarabhai, Jamnalal Bajaj, Lallubhai Samaldas, Lalji Naranji, Kirloskar, the Modis, Kilachand Devichand, and Harkishan Lal show few signs of any major contact with, not to speak of subordination to, foreign capital.[5]

Thus the Indian capitalist class did not for its economic existence depend on foreign capital. And not being so, 'tied up', it did not become an ally of British rule in India. In fact, quite the reverse, as will be shown in the next section.

This does not imply that the Indian capitalist class played the same role economically and politically as the capitalist class did in Britain or France or even Germany or Japan during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries respectively. But the difference did not lie in the former being "comprador", as is widely assumed. The difference lay in the Indian bourgeoisie being the capitalist class of an underdeveloped country which was structurally integrated into world capitalism as a colony. In other words, while the Indian capitalist class was not as a class inte-

5. Nor did these capitalist houses have significant semi-feudal landholdings. Several of them did, of couse, have largescale capitalist farms. This question is not of direct relevance here except in so far as their semi-feudal interests might have subordinated them to imperialism as in China.

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grated with British capital in a subordinate position, the economy of which it was a part was so, i.e., colonially, integrated with and subordinated to world capitalism. The weaknesses and constraints, both economic and political, under which this class functioned sprang from this fact and not from compradorism.[6] This fact is important for three reasons:

(1) For understanding the economic and political capacities and frailties of this class, we should look to the structure of the colonial economy and not to the alleged subordinate class position of the capitalist class. Similarly, the failure of colonialism to develop the Indian economy should not in itself lead to the conclusion that the Indian bourgeoisie too had deserted the task. This would be so only if this class was integrated with colonial capital and colonialism itself.

(2) Since it is the economy that is colonially subordinated and structured and not the capitalist class, the latter, on the one hand, struggle against imperialism and for independent capitalist development, and, on the other, is compelled to compromise with imperialism because the structural links with the world capitalist economy weaken the position of capitalism in a colonial or ex-colonial society.

(3) This is a fate which is not peculiarly that of the Indian capitalist class. Since world capitalism as a structure exists as imperialism whose one part is developed at the cost of the underdevelopment of the other, those states within its orbit which do not become developed and metropoles tend to become underdeveloped and colonies unless they manage to walk out of the structure itself.

6. In fact, these did not in the main spring even from direct administrative suppression. British colonial policies in India were geared primarily to the colonial integration of Indian economy with British economy and not to the direct suppression of the Indian capitalist class.

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III

(Long-term Conflict)

The Indian capitalist class came into sharp conflict with imperialism on almost every basic economic issue.[7] In nearly every field of industry Indian capital entered into competition with either British home capital or British capital in India. Imperialism would not yield on these basic issues. On the other hand, the Indian capitalists stood up firmly to defend their independent growth. Here I have space for only a bare enumeration of the major areas of conflict.

(a) First came the conflict with British home industry. The Indian capitalists saw clearly that they must limit and then bring to an end the domination of their internal market by British and other foreign industries. Consequently, they constantly agitated for *effective* tariff protection to their industries. Later, when Imperial Preferences, or the policy of tariff concessions to British industry, were introduced, they mounted a powerful campaign against them because of the harmful effects on Indian industries and the deterioration in the conditions of trade with non-Empire countries. They also fought for high export duties on certain raw materials needed by Indian industries. Throughout the 1930s they campaigned for tariff autonomy for the Government of India.

(b) The large-scale foreign capital investment in Indian industry after 1918 led to a strong attack on foreign capital by the Indian capitalists. They repudiated the widely propagated theory that India's economic development could not take place without foreign capital. Foreign capital investment in India was itself, they maintained, the result of the country's economic exploitation and led not to its development but further exploitation. In parti-

7. In this paper I have studied the stand taken directly by the class itself through its class organizations and spokesmen and not through its ideological or political spokesmen. The latter can be the subject of a separate study.

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cular, they reacted strongly to the attempt of the giant British industrial corporations to defend and extend their markets in India by forming Indian subsidiaries (India Limiteds as they came to be known) to take advantage of the tariff protection granted during the 1920s and 1930s, the cheaper Indian labour, and the nearness of the market. They immediately saw the danger that these "Leviathan" corporations posed to the much smaller Indian enterprises in the field as also to the long-term growth interests of Indian capital in general. They demanded from the government administrative steps against such "unfair" internal competition. They raised the slogan of "Indian domination of Indian industries". Interestingly, hardly any Indian capitalist entered into partnership with British capital in these India Limiteds.

The right to discriminate against and if necessary to exclude "non-national interests", that is, British capital, was taken up as a major issue for agitation by the Indian capitalists during the 1930s and 1940s. In the constitutional discussions from 1931 to 1935, they fought hard against any constitutional safeguards being provided to foreign capital and demanded, instead, unfettered powers to discriminate against British and foreign capital.

During the World War II, the threat of the much stronger American capital entering India and resulting in "American economic domination over India" in the post-war period and the creation of "new foreign vested interests" was immediately countered by the Indian capitalists through vehement agitation.

It is to be noted that the Indian capitalists did not fight for the expulsion of the existing foreign capital. Given the relatively small size of the existing foreign capital and the fact that only a small part of it was linked directly with British monopoly capital at home, and given the withdrawal of patronage by the colonial state, they felt strong enough to compete with it on equal terms. But under no circumstances should foreign capital be permitted to strengthen its position in the Indian economy. And as seen

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earlier, they objected to the entry of the giant industrial corporations of the metropolitan countries, such as the Imperial Chemical Company, the Lever Brothers, the Burmah Oil Company, and the American corporations.

In particular, they constantly agitated against the entry of foreign capital into key or heavy industries such as machinery and machine tools, automobiles, aircraft, shipping, heavy chemicals, fertilizers, and the entire field of minerals and petroleum. They wanted complete reservation of these industries for Indian private or state capital and "statutory prohibition against the foreign non-Indian ownership, management and control" of any of them.

(c) The Indian capitalists objected to the domination of the Indian banking structure by British finance capital and demanded, from about 1913, that a controlling central bank should be formed and placed under the control either of Indian shareholders or of the Indian legislature, which was to some extent amenable to Indian influence. In no case should the "City of London" be given much of a say in it. Throughout the 20th century intense economic struggle was waged by Indian capital to oust British capital from and acquire a dominant position in banking and insurance in India. Once again the government was urged to put legislative and other restrictions on the existing operations as also on the fresh entry of the foreign insurance companies. The Indian capitalists agitated throughout the 1920s and 1930s against the linkage of the rupee to the pound sterling and against its overvaluation as these measures encouraged imports of foreign manufactures and foreign capital and thus hampered Indian capital.

(d) Foreign trade and shipping were an important source of surplus appropriation and the entire Indian capitalist class rallied behind the individual Indian efforts to appropriate a larger share of these and other invisible items of the balance of payments. Indian struggle against the British shipping monopoly had started in the 1890s and was pressed on unrelentingly after that despite repeated failures. The capitalists also made a determined

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effort during the 1920s and 1930s to get a new law passed reserving Indian coastal shipping for Indians.

(e) The Indian capitalist class was fully aware of the need for active and direct state aid to its operations and it carried on a prolonged and all-sided struggle on the issue. State aid was sought for almost every field of economic activity—industry, banking, insurance, sea and air transport, inland transport, and agriculture.

The state alone, of course, could provide tariff protection against British home industries.

Recognizing its own weakness in a straightforward competition with foreign capital, the Indian capitalist class saw state action as the major instrument for keeping out foreign capital as also keeping it under check through direct administrative action as well as through public sector enterprises where the alternative would be the use not of Indian but of foreign capital, because of the large scale of the capital investment required. Such was, for example, the case with heavy industries, essential minerals, and the broad spectrum of the infrastructure.

The state was also urged to give direct help in the form of guarantees and subsidies to industries with a long gestation period or involving a large risk element such as heavy machine and chemical industries and shipping.

The Indian capitalists realized that no real and long-term industrial development could occur without self-sufficiency in heavy machine and chemical industries and other similar industries such as automobile, aeroplane, and shipbuilding. But precisely in these fields the colonial administration was not willing to help the rise of rival industries in the colony. Yet without state help in the form of guarantees, subsidies, state-purchase guarantees, reservation of markets, and in all other conceivable ways, it was not possible for the Indian capitalists to develop these industries because of the large capital requirements, the long gestation period, and the large risk element. Repeated attempts by the Indian capitalists to move into these fields

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in the 1930s and 1940s foundered on the rock of official indifference and hostility. Consequently, they carried on a constant agitation for active and massive state aid to their efforts in these fields. Simultaneously, as noted earlier, they opposed any attempt to introduce foreign capital in these fields.

The Indian capitalists also expected the state to help overcome one of their major weaknesses—the shortage of technical personnel and the low level of indigenous technology. One of the constraints that the government was urged to place on the foreign enterprises in India related to the compulsory training of Indian technical personnel.

The crucial role of bureaucracy in aiding foreign enterprise and hindering Indian enterprise was also clearly seen and the demand for the Indianization of the key administrative posts dealing with the economy was vigorously pushed.

To satisfy all these demands, the state would have to make heavy financial commitments. At the same time, noted the Indian capitalists, state revenues, or the social surplus appropriated by the colonial government, were being utilized to subserve imperial interests and in a manner inimical to internal capitalist growth. Consequently, the Indian capitalist class made Indian control of the state finances one of its major political demands. Even in its most compromising periods, it was not willing to compromise on this demand. For example, during the Round Table Conference discussions, its representative stood firm on the question of financial safeguards in the proposed constitution. The question of state aid to industries also led them to attack the high military expenditure due to the maintenance of a large army for purposes of imperial expansion and defence, the bloated administrative expenditure and the large public debt, for these heads hardly left any funds with the government with which to aid industry.

The Indian capitalists also took note of the drain or the export of the Indian social surplus, so sorely needed by

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them for internal investment, and they urged the government to take preventive measures.

(f) Thus we find that the Indian capitalist class fully realized that the imperialist economic exploitation of India blocked their long-term growth; and it opposed all the three major channels through which the metropolis extracted India's social surplus: domination of the Indian market, investment of foreign capital, both industrial and finance, and direct surplus expropriation through control over public finance and, in particular, through high military expenditure for imperial purposes.

The metropolitan power could not and would not yield on any of the major focal points of conflict on which the Indian capitalist class formulated a clear-cut national policy. Hence this class felt the clear and urgent need for a nation-state of its own. It articulated this political demand in an unequivocal manner after 1929 on the ground that no real economic development of the country was possible without the realization of this demand.[8] For certain political and short-term economic reasons, this class was willing to temporize with this and other demands, but the long-term and basic issues of conflict with impe-

8. In his presidential reply to the third annual general meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry on 16 February 1930, G. D. Birla said: "I am very sorry that we have not been able to influence the Government or to convert them to our views, *but we never anticipated that.* It is *impossible* in the present circumstances and in the present political condition of our country to convert the Government to our views; but I think the *only* solution of our present difficulties lies in every Indian businessman strengthening the hands of those who are fighting for the freedom of our country... Swaraj (freedom) is not a question of sentiment. It is a question of bread. The prosperity of the country depends *entirely* on the amount of political freedom which we get and I think that not only in the interests of the country but in the interests of the capitalists, the employers, and the industrialists who should try to fight and strengthen the hands of those who are fighting for Swaraj". (Emphasis added). *Report of the Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the FICCI, Vol. III, Third Annual Meeting* (1930), pp. 264-5.

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rialism placed limits on the extent and duration of the compromise that it could enter into with imperialism.

IV

(Short-term Dependence and Collaboration)

The Indian capitalists' hostility to British rule was muted by several factors.

(a) For one, they did get a chance to grow continuously; and however oppressed they might feel at times, they were never directly or nakedly suppressed. The two world wars in particular provided them opportunities for windfall profits and rapid growth, putting brakes on the development of anti-imperialist sentiments among them in the short run.

(b) Secondly, the Indian capitalist class began its upward climb during the second half of the 19th century from extremely modest beginnings. The traditional banking and commercial capital of India was destroyed or diverted during the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century. There was thus hardly any primitive or original capital with which to start.[9] Moreover, the existing capital was very thinly spread among a host of merchants, bankers, and money-lenders. The process of normal accumulation had thus to start from a very low floor. Denied the opportunity of makng windfall profits through colonial plunder or unequal trade, denied any state assistance, and denied even the normal opportunities of growth in the spheres of foreign trade, banking and their own domestic market, the rate of capital accumulation by the Indian commercial and industrial bourgeoisie was extremely slow. This had several consequences which explain

9. The left-over pickings of the China opium trade and the yarn trade with Britain, petty government contracts, the cotton boom of the American Civil War, the fall-out from bureaucratic corruption in British India or the princely states, and the normal profits arising in the sphere of internal circulation formed the narrow base of the original capital of the Indian bourgeoisie.

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the late entry of the class into active nationalist politics and the mildness of their political stance.

(1) The Indian capitalist class remained weak for years and therefore lacking in the self-confidence needed to challenge the mightiest imperialism of the day.

(2) The slow rate and the petty absolute amount of accumulation of Indian capital could be accommodated by imperialism. Because of its very small size, Indian capital was not seen by imperialism as a strong challenger; and so long as the Indian capital's share of the social surplus remained small, it was possible to give it enough scope to grow without affecting the overall imperialist channels of surplus extraction, nor was it difficult to find avenues for its reinvestment. Indian capital was thus seldom faced with the total stoppage of growth or with extinction.

(3) Consequently, even though the conflict between the two capitalisms emerged early, it took decades to mature and become sharp. This conflict was always expected by the two sides to occur in the future—it was a long-term conflict. The Indian bourgeoisie sought to resolve the long-term conflict in its own favour through political and ideological struggle, while itself entering into short-term compromises, accommodation and co-operation with the colonial administration. The state of acute tension could have been expected to come after the second World War when the Indian capitalist class reached respectable proportions. But precisely at this time political freedom came as a result of popular political pressure and changes in the world balance of forces and the Indian capitalist class now entered a new period of rapid growth without having passed through a period of total antagonism to the imperial power.

(4) The consistent and continuous opportunity to grow combined with the fact that the Indian industry invariably developed, at least till 1918, through Marx's second path, that is, from above, also made the Indian bourgeoisie quite conservative in politics.

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(5) Nearly all the major capitalist families of modern India developed during the 19th century from rather humble beginnings. None of them belonged to the earlier ruined families. Instead, their rather fresh memories of British rule were quite positive. This too created a psychology of overall satisfaction with British rule for at least the first or second generation entrepreneurs.

(c) Thirdly, while the Indian capitalist class did not depend on British capital, it did, in the short run, depend on the colonial administration. This aspect has been often ignored. The British Indian government was of course an instrument of British colonialism. But it was also the day-to-day administrative authority in the country to which the capitalist class could not be totally hostile and on which it depended for innumerable purposes. The government alone could give some measure of tariff protection, at least against the non-British competitors. It was in full control of the major internal transport system (the railways) and the entire port organization—both gave it major leverage vis a vis trade and industry. It alone could give mining concessions (so crucial to coal, iron and steel, and many other industries), land leaseholds, and land and other facilities for generation of electric power.[10] It was in control of a major field of capital accumulation, that is, government contracts. Its industries department could extend or withhold numerous facilities, including the creation of syndicates, cartels and monopolies. It was a major buyer of industrial products. It had the power to give or withhold permission to start factories at particular sites. Through the central bank it could help or squeeze a hard-pressed industrialist who had over-extended his credit. Its taxation policy had decisive impact on the rate of accumu-

10. This put the sector of industrialists whose major interest lay in mining, iron and steel, and electric power under strong pressure to remain loyalists. This factor, along with the fact that the government was the largest consumer of its steel products, seems to have had this effect on the House of Tatas, among others.

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lation. Its labour policy was another important instrument of leverage.

Above all the capitalist class depended on the government for guaranteeing law and order and social peace in the period of intense social turmoil and political and labour unrest that followed the first World War. It was also aware of the fact that if the government remained intransigent and refused to compromise with and give concessions to the national movement in its phases of struggle, the latter could pass over to a very radical phase. Thus during every such phase, the Indian bourgeoisie was partially dependent on the government for keeping the national movement confined within a safe mould.[11] Not surprisingly, during every nationalist upsurge, the capitalists had to appeal to the government to make a compromise. This political dependence on the foreign government was, however, the dependence not of a comprador class but of a capitalist class in an era of mass movements and socialist revolutions.

This multifarious dependence on the government compelled the Indian capitalist class to adopt a moderate political approach and in the economic realm to function in a close relationship with the government. Its periodic political hostility to the government could not be prolonged

11. In a memorandum, a copy of which he sent to Lord Halifax, summarizing what he had been telling British leaders in England during his visit, G. D. Birla wrote in 1935: "The right-wing Congressmen are thus fighting against two forces—the Government and the Socialists. The latter are making a direct attack by discrediting the leaders for having "achieved nothing". The Government is helping the Socialists by ignoring the right-wing; between the two the right wing is being crushed... Sensible Indian men and women realise their need of British help; they want British friendship." G. D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: A Personal Memoir* (Calcutta, 1953), pp. 193-5. Again, in March 1937, in a letter to the Viceroy, Birla after having referred to the Working Committee Resolution on office acceptance wrote: "I think this is a great triumph for the right wing of the Congress and a *counter-response would very much strengthen their hands.* I hope His Excellency appreciates the position". (Emphasis added). Ibid. p. 214.

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for any length of time and had in fact to be quite spasmodic. At the same time, to repeat, this close economic relationship was that of an independent capitalist class with the government of the day and not that of a comprador or a junior partner of the British ruling class which controlled the British Indian administration.

(d) Another source of the short-term compromise situation was the imperialist policy, as distinct from the colonial structure, towards the Indian captalist class. While opposing or neglecting the basic, overall, and long-term growth interests of this class, the British rulers followed the policy of giving it timely concessions in order to preserve the colonial system. Two factors were crucial in this respect. Throughout the 20th century, British rule was endangered by and had to reckon with the basic phenomena: one was the crisis of the colonial economy which found reflection in agricultural stagnation and large-scale urban unemployment; the other was the rising tempo of a popular national movement which was getting increasingly mass-based. The necessity of containing economic and political discontent compelled the colonial authorities to give concessions to the Indian capitalist class, especially in fields where no major British interests were involved.

Some growth of Indian industry was essential if the economic crisis of colonial under-development and the resulting discontent were to be kept within bounds. In other words, Indian trade and industry were to serve as an economic safety-valve, especially as British capital showed no inclination to make large-scale productive investments in India.

Politically, it was essential to prevent the Indian capitalist class from giving large-scale and active help to the national movement and to persuade it to use its leverage in the movement to keep it confined to "reasonable" and moderate proportions.

Consequently, the colonial administration extended concessions and opportunities, to the Indian capitalist class to enable it to grow. It also gave representation to its

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spokesmen and associations on all government committees and commissions dealing with economic affairs. In other words, it entered into a bargaining situation with this class in order to preserve the basic imperial interests. This policy was in particular and vigorously followed whenever the nationalist struggle reached a militant crescendo or when the Indian capitalist class was economically so imperilled that it could go over the brink. The capitalists had now to be detached from the struggle or, at least, their commitment to it watered down. This was a part of the policy of divide and rule and the carrot and the stick. Precisely at such moments the Indian capitalists too were willing to be conciliated since they too, on the one hand, would be getting frightened of the militancy of the national movement, and, on the other, would be keen to get out of the threatening economic crisis. In this case, it may be said, they followed the reverse policy of the stick and the carrot.

Thus, for example, in 1905 the Industries Department was opened; in 1916 the Industrial Commission was appointed; in 1922 the policy of tariff protection was announced; tariff on textile imports was raised to 25 per cent in 1930 and 75 per cent in 1933, and simultaneously in 1932 sugar industry was given protection;[12] also in 1932 formation of the Reserve Bank was taken in hand; in 1932-33 the Scindia Steam Navigation Company was enabled to expand its business; during the second World War, strikes were banned, contracts for the gigantic war effort were shared with the Indian capitalist class, and promises were made to undertake central planning and give large-scale state aid to Indian industry. And in each

12. This meant a major opening for the Indian capitalists at a time when normal channels of investment and accumulation were drying up. Thirty sugar factories immediately came up and by 1934 their number had gone up to 130 from 32 in 1931. Almost every major industrialist of the country took part in the sugar boom. Moreover, many a capitalist found that profits of his sugar factory alone enabled him to keep up the old rate of dividends.

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one of the cases cited above the Indian capitalists reciprocated by adopting a conciliatory political approach. While in 1930 they had boycotted the Round Table Conference and the legislative councils, in 1932 they agreed to cooperate with the Round Table Conference Sub-Committee and from 1932-3 bent their energies to bring about a compromise between the National Congress and the government. During the entire period of the second World War, their politics remained in a low key. They failed to give to the Quit India movement of 1942 the type of strong backing they had given to the Civil Disobedience campaigns of 1920 and 1930.

(e) It may be once again repeated that all the factors discussed above merely muted the conflict between the Indian capitalist class and imperialism, and led to short-term concessions, compromises and accommodation. The long-term antagonism between the two continued as imperialism would not yield on any of the basic policy issues, namely, metropolitan domination of the Indian market, British capital investment, in particular through the subsidiaries of the giant corporations, high military expenditure, and the question of state aid in initiating heavy industry, developing indigenous technology, and extending general financial support to Indian industry.

V

(Capitalist Class and the Anti-Imperialist Struggle)

The Indian capitalists gave broad support to the national movement against imperialism. On the one hand, this movement enabled them to get concessions from imperialism; and, on the other, it coincided with their long-term conflict with British capital and colonialism. As pointed out earlier, they did not eschew the nationalist struggle for another reason also. They recognized that the Indian people were politically restive and bent on anti-imperialist struggle because of their conditions of life and because of their own contradiction with imperialism, that their

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nationalist political activity would continue and grow irrespective of capitalist participation, and that, therefore, the task before the capitalist class was to remain relevant to such a basic and powerful social force as nationalism and to try to establish their hegemony over its programme, organization, and strategy and patterns of struggle.

The twofold relationship of the capitalist class to imperialism, i.e., long-term antagonism and short-term accommodation and dependence, led it to work for a non-revolutionary pattern of anti-imperialist struggle. The struggle was, however, to be always kept within safe and acceptable limits. Its aim was not at any stage to lead to permanent hostility and total confrontation but the exertion of enough pressure to force a compromise leading to concessions and a period of peace in which to digest the concessions and prepare for the next round of struggle. Thus the struggle was to be based on the strategy of Struggle or Pressure-Compromise-Struggle or Pressure (P-C-P) and stage by stage (or step by step) advance towards the bourgeois nation-state and independent economic development. The political aim was to be achieved not through the sudden expulsion of imperialism or the seizure of power but through a negotiated settlement.

(a) The capitalist political strategy required that whenever a mass national struggle broke out it should remain limited and never get "out of control", the hostility of the government must not be total and should be rigidly controlled so that the overall atmosphere did not become so unfriendly as to prevent the emergence of cordiality in the following period; and the struggle should be of short duration and quickly resolvable leading to a reasonable advance. Thus compromise must quickly follow a short period of struggle. In fact, the capitalist class had a certain aversion to any direct political action by the masses (usually described, for example by G. D. Birla, as the method of "disorder"). But recognizing the neces-

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sity as also the inevitability of some such action, it tried to keep such action confined within a narrow political and ideological framework and tried to bring it to an end as soon as possible by arriving at a compromise. *In no case would the capitalist class encourage prolonged mass political activity, even of the non-violent variety.* There were several reasons for this:

(1) As pointed out earlier, the possiblity of an immediate compromise leading to limited and short-term growth existed in the objective economic and political situations of the capitalist class and imperialism. A prolonged struggle and mass unrest would also dampen the current economic growth and opportunities.

(2) Dependence on the administration meant that the capitalist class could not afford total and long-term official antagonism which would follow a prolonged and resolute struggle and unmitigated hostility to imperialism. Hence its emphasis that the gulf between the "people" and the administration must never become too wide. Moreover, as a propertied class, it was particularly vulnerable to suppression by a still rigorous administration.

(3) Above all there was the desire to check the growth of the left wing or the radical political forces. It was felt that any resolute and prolonged and, therefore, bitter struggle against imperialism, even if it was non-violent, would impart to the people "destructive political education" in place of training in a constructive approach and lead in the end to the growth of revolutionary feelings which would in turn encourage the notion of class hatred. Moreover, people would carry over such "destructive" radical and class feelings to the post-independence period. The feelings of distrust aroused against the foreign regime would then be transferred to the Indian government. Even before that revolution might become inevitable. That would be not only Britain's "funeral" but also India's. In the more immediate politics, the mentality of struggle, it was felt, strengthened the left wing of the Congress at the cost of the right wing.

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It should, however, be noted that the fear of the left only made the Indian capitalists chary of a prolonged and continuous struggle and the "struggle-mentality"; it did not drive them into the arms of imperialism (though it did establish another point of contact and mutual help between the capitalists and the government). The Indian capitalists contained the left wing by helping the right wing of the Congress, i.e., right wing nationalists, and not by surrendering before imperialism. They thus carried on a two-front political struggle by strengthening the right wing nationalists not only in their struggle against the left wing but also in their struggle against imperialism.[13] In other words, the Indian capitalists supported the right wing of the nationalist movement. It is idle to speculate at this time as to what would they have done if the left in India had been very strong or whether they would still have stayed in the camp of nationalism.

(b) While refusing to encourage a prolonged mass political struggle and using its influence to bring every struggle to a quick end, the Indian capitalist class also exercised all the political pressure at its command to see that the struggle ended not through a nationalist surrender but through concessions and compromise by both sides.

The compromise had to be a "reasonable" one. It must never aim too high. The demands should never be pitched so high that imperialism would find it difficult to compromise. At the same time, the compromise should never mean *surrender;* it must always make positive gains in economic and political rights. The compromise must always take the capitalist class to a higher stage. Every new compromise must mean an extension of bourgeois power so that gradually the balance underwent a basic shift but without an all-out struggle, without revolution, and even without an opportunity for radical forces to

13. This is in complete contrast with the political behaviour of the comprador bourgeoisie of China which thrice, in 1911, in 1926-7 and in 1945-9, not only attacked the left but also surrendered before imperialism.

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make a breakthrough. Thus in the 1920s the capitalist class agitated for constitutional advance and responsible government and tariff and currency autonomy; in the 1930s for Dominion Status with safeguards but with full Indian control over finance and tariffs and the right to restrict the entry of foreign capital; from 1939-45 for effective transfer of power to a "national government" with complete control over the economy, including the power to plan for the post-war period; and after the war for full political independence.

The compromises and concessions also performed another political function. They enabled the bourgeoisie to keep a tight control over mass political activity and to constantly reduce the political temperature of the masses. This could not be done without the compromise being made palatable to the broad nationalist sentiment. In the absence of a compromise, not only did the left wing grow stronger but even the right wing of the national movement was compelled to adopt a militant programme.

Compromises and concessions do not, however, at any stage lead the capitalist class to lose sight of the long-term objective which is constantly striven for. Each compromise is used as a jumping-off ground for the next one. After each compromise pressure for the next round begins to be built up and that too at a quickened pace and within a reasonable time. *Thus continuous pressure on imperialism is maintained though not a continuous state of confrontation or struggle.* An example may be cited. G. D. Birla worked hard throughout 1935-6 to bring about a compromise on the constitution. He used for this purpose all his persuasive powers on Mahatma Gandhi and the British leaders and authorities. Yet, as soon as success was achieved, he wrote to Mahadev Desai (and therefore to Gandhi) from London on 30 July 1937 that "after working the Constitution for two or three years successfully" the Indians should tell the British that "they had come to a dead stop because no further progress was possible without a new Act . . . that India could not be

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satisfied with her present position. And unless there was a permanent agreement there was likelihood of direct action." Once again specifying the limited duration of the compromise, he pointed out to Lord Lothian "that in case there was no advance after two or three years, then India would be compelled to take direct action".[14]

(c) This entire strategy of step by step political progress in an ascending order through a series of struggles and compromises sprang from the capitalist character of the Indian capitalist class, from the fact that it was a propertied class struggling against imperialism in an era when the exploited classes were simultaneously struggling for their rights and even challenging the very basic concept of class society, and from the fact that the capitalists whom the class accepted as its spokesmen and leaders in the economic and political field and in its relationship with the colonial authorities and the national movement were extremely far-sighted, shrewd, and sagacious. This strategy did not, therefore, represent the politics of a comprador class or a junior partner of British capital bearing a collaborationist relationship with British capital and imperialism. Undoubtedly, the Indian capitalist class carried on its struggle against imperialism in a compromising and non-revolutionary way. But the aim as also the net result of its entire strategy was not to betray the national movement but to create conditions of growth even under imperialism and at the same time to establish its hegemony over the national movement, to keep under right-wing influence the urban and rural petty bourgeois democrats and radicals, and thus to keep the revolutionary left in check. This strategy was eminently successful in so far as a bourgeois nation-state was brought into existence in 1947 and the forces of left were kept weak and divided throughout the period of the anti-imperialist struggle so that the challenge to bourgeois power after independence would remain feeble.

14. *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, pp. 255-6.

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(d) The Indian capitalists associated with the nationalist movement both as a segment of Indian society and as a separate and distinct political force; but they did not do so primarily through direct participation. In their personal politics most of them were Liberals; they seldom went beyond constitutional agitation. Most of them welcomed official titles (though this did not prevent Gandhi, Sardar Patel, etc., from describing some of the title-holding capitalists as patriots). The overwhelming majority of the capitalists could not therefore be described as active anti-imperialists. Some of them did of course give financial support to the Congress but perhaps the extent of such support has been exaggerated.

What is of far greater significance, the class as a whole including some of its conservative members, *never* opposed the National Congress politically and always remained within the mainstream of the national movement. Even while keeping their individual or class political position autonomous, showing scant regard for the Congress programme of non-cooperation, civil disobedience and boycott, the capitalist spokesmen supported the Congress political stand, particularly after 1928. Even when enjoying periods of economic honeymoon with the colonial authorities, they did not urge or encourage the political movement to surrender or to compromise on essentials. As a class, the Indian capitalists *refused in spite of blandishments to enter into a separate political agreement with the colonial authorities behind the Congress's back.* The question of joining the imperialist camp did not even arise. Invariably, following an implicit division of labour, they referred the colonial authorities to the Congress as the organization and Gandhi as the leader with whom they should carry on political negotiations and arrive at a compromise. In the economic field, however, the capitalists negotiated the compromises directly. Though, within the Congress, the right wing was preferred and supported against the left wing, for political purposes the Congress as a whole was seen as the national spokesman. Even the

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left wing was not attacked openly, and an attempt to do so by a small segment in 1936 was firmly put down by the overwhelming majority. On the other hand, the National Liberals and the Hindu Mahasabha were never taken seriously and were extended little political support.

VI

(The Question of Political Roads)

In discussing the question of the roles that the bourgeoisie may play in a national liberation struggle, which is the form that the bourgeois democratic revolution takes in a colonial or semi-colonial country, the tendency among recent Marxist writers has been to posit broadly two historical models which are then held to apply in all essentials to all the extant or possible cases.

The first is the French model in which the bourgeoisie playing the leading role and undeterred by the rise of a left wing on its flank boldly overthrows the absolutist monarchy and the feudal nobility and thus under its own leadership accomplishes the bourgeois democratic revolution.

In the second or the Chinese (and the Russian) model, the bourgeoisie starts on the road to democratic revolution (for democracy, nationalism, and agrarian reform) but because of its class links with the semi-feudal landed class and colonialism and the consequent lack of independence in politics and because of its fear of the simultaneously developing radical forces of the politically aroused working class and peasantry, it vacillates and ultimately abandons or betrays its historical task of making the bourgeois democratic revolution, fails to fight imperialism, and in fact goes over to imperialism and semi-feudalism. It thus betrays nationalism to defend its narrowly conceived class interests. Two sub-cases now follow: (1) This betrayal leads to a certain period of counter-revolutionary predominance or the restoration of imperialism and semi-feudalism. (2) Alternatively,

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following the period of counter-revolution, the working class develops its political force, allies with the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and brings the bourgeois democratic revolution to fruition under its leadership, leading to a quick transition to socialism. Crucial to this model is the notion of the bourgeoisie betraying the national liberation struggle by allying itself with imperialism. And the determining role in this outcome is played by two factors: (i) The lack of a significant stratum of industrial capitalists which is independent or not basically dependent on foreign capital and colonialism (or is not comprador in character); and (ii) the existence of a powerful revolutionary movement of workers and peasants whose fear drives the bourgeoisie into the arms of imperialism.

A study of the political role of the Indian bourgeoisie during the 20th century shows that the Indian pattern of development did not follow either of these two models.[15] Certainly, it did not lead or support a resolute revolutionary mass struggle against imperialism. At the same time, as we have seen earlier, it did not betray the national, anti-imperialist movement; it did not go over to imperialism; it always stayed in the camp of anti-imperialism; it was willing to participate in the task of national liberation; it even showed a certain capacity to fight imperialism, though its pattern of struggle was never revolutionary; and, lastly, it consistently backed the petty bourgeois leadership of the national movement. In other words, it revealed the capacity to fulfil the bourgeois democratic

15. Sometimes there is a tendency to suggest that the deviation from the Chinese model is only temporary or for the time being and that in the long run the Chinese (or the Russian) model will apply. This has in fact been said since the 1920s when the famous Colonial Thesis of the Comintern codified this view in 1928. But with transfer of political sovereignty to India in 1947 and the consequent passage of nearly 25 years one long run at least should be seen to have come to an end. Not to see this is to mystify and indulge in mere logic-chopping. After all, any long run to be a useful concept of analysis must have some sort of limited time-span.

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tasks but in a non-revolutionary way and without completing the economic and the political tasks simultaneously. This result was of course not accidental.

Firstly, the Indian bourgeoisie had grown as an independent capitalist class which was not subordinated to the metropolitan capitalist class.

Secondly, the working class and the revolutionary left failed to organize the other dominated classes around the tasks of national liberation and agrarian revolution and remained so weak as not to pose challenge to bourgeois hegemony over the national movement and social development. In both Russia and China, the revolutionary working class parties had taken up the struggle for bourgeois democratic tasks on their own, i.e., *independently*. In India, this was not done. Neither the proletariat was prepared for the task, nor were the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeosie brought under its political influence. Consequently, the Indian bourgeoisie was never faced with the type of challenge from the left that its counterparts faced in Russia or China. *Thus the political, ideological and organizational weakness of the working class and its political leadership played a crucial role in the ability of the Indian bourgeoisie to follow a third road.*

Thirdly, the Indian bourgeoisie succeeded in keeping the vast petty bourgeois masses, both rural and urban, under its political and ideological influence with the result that these masses confined their political and ideological activity within the broad parameters of a bourgeois developmental programme in both economic and political fields. *But this it succeeded in doing precisely because of its refusal to desert and betray nationalism and because of the political weakness of the left.* Also crucial in this respect was the role of Gandhi who perfected a political technique which simultaneously mobilized the masses politically and prevented them from acting on their own or becoming their own political masters or even functioning politically in a continuous manner, i.e.,

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non-spasmodically. The result was that the Indian capitalists, on the one hand, gave all-out support to Gandhi, and on the other, learnt not to be mortally afraid of the masses so long as they could be kept under rigid political tutelage and their political awareness remained at a low level. They thus evolved a different relationship with the masses than that evolved by the capitalists in Russia or China.

Sometimes the theory that the Indian bourgeoisie did in the end betray nationalism is put forth on the ground that the Indian road only led to the transfer of political power and not to the expulsion of all imperialist economic interests. While this fact is certainly important for any study of India's social development and is also a crucial constituent of the Indian way, it does not take away from the central aspect of the change that came in 1947. Nor is it very relevant to the present question. In a bourgeois democratic revolution, the crucial question is that of state power which is then used to promote capitalist development and not to hinder it as before. And here a decisive change did occur.[16] Similarly, the question of the success of bourgeois democratic revolution should not be confused with the capacity to generate self-sustained economic development or with the immediate completion of all the bourgeois democratic tasks. The basic confusion here lies in that many Marxists want to encompass the question of the entire future (post-colonial) social development of the ex-colonies under the broad category of bourgeois democratic revolution. This I suggest is incorrect. The main function of the bourgeois democratic revolution is to settle the question of state power and to open the way to the capitalist development of society so that feudalism or imperialism no longer determine the main direction of its political and economic life. Whether

16. Though even in the economic field crucial changes occurred. Imperialist domination of the Indian market was severely curbed and the direct appropriation of Indian social surplus virtually ended. Even the position of the existing foreign capital was weakened, while the entry of fresh foreign capital was restricted.

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self-sustaining economic development occurs or not is quite another matter which is linked to the wider question of the capacity of under-developed capitalism to grow in the era of world capitalism-imperialism and socialism. When such development fails to occur or when certain other tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution are not completed, certainly other social revolutionary forces emerge. But they do not then make a bourgeois democratic revolution but *merely complete the tasks left over by it and they do so as part of a new social revloutionary process.* It may be noted that no bourgeois democratic revolution since the French Revolution, if even that, has completed all its tasks immediately or even in the few succeeding decades. If success of the bourgeois democratic revolution is defined as widely as many at present tend to do, then all such revolutions can be successful or completed only when a society turns socialist.[17] For example, when the bourgeois democratic revolution occurred in Britain in 1648, its essence lay in the transfer of state power to the bourgeoisie which could now set out to organize society and economy in its own interests, i.e., along capitalist lines. No rigid time-table for self-sustained economic development was guaranteed (it could have been upset by so many intervening factors) nor were feudal economic and social relations suddenly, dramatically, or immediately overthrown. Even more so was this the case in Germany, Italy and Japan. I have also the feeling that to argue back from state power to the lack of sudden economic shift when the sudden shift in state power itself is in part and basi-

17. This was seen by Karl Marx as early as 1849 in the context of bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe: "Every revolutionary upheaval, however remote from the class struggle (between bourgeoisie and working class) its goal may appear to be, must fail until the revolutionary working class is victorious... every social reform remains a utopia until the proletarian revolution and the feudalistic counter-revolution measure swords in a *world war*". Introduction to *Wage, Labour, and Capital* (Moscow, 1970), pp. 17-8.

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cally the result of changes in the economic field is to indulge in circular reasoning.

Sometimes, perhaps, the confusion arises because of the emphasis on the word revolution in the phrase bourgeois revolution. But this refers to a radical shift in state power and economic relations. This shift need not occur through a revolution based on the masses and by a revolutionary democratic bourgeoisie. It can be brought about in quite non-revolutionary or even reactionary ways. There is again the example of Germany and Japan.

The crux of the economic question after 1947 was not that of completing the bourgeois democratic revolution but that of breaking the Indian economy's structural links with world capitalism. This task would remain basically unperformed even if the penetration of the ex-metropolitan country's capital was weakened. The basic weakness of the Indian economy and of its capitalist class lay in the economy's integration with the world capitalist economy in a subordinate or dependent position. So long as this structural link lasted, one or the other national or international capitalist group would continue to try to penetrate it and threaten its autonomous development. This structural link would also stand in the way of self-sustained growth. The degree of social, political, ideological and economic transformation and mobilization of the people and the intensity of the struggle against world capitalism that the task of breaking this structural link requires is revealed by the example of Cuba where it took a socialist revolution to accomplish it.

Moreover, this structural link is not the result of the prevalence of semi-colonialism or neo-colonialism; it is part of the process of capitalist development in the modern era. Consequently, after 1947, the task in India was not to organize a national liberation struggle of which the struggle against capitalism would form an integral part, but to organize a struggle against capitalism of which struggle against imperialism would form an integral part. This issue was and is of great theoretical and political

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significance since the former understanding could lead to a political struggle that was divorced from reality or to collaboration with the under-developed capitalism in the name of fighting imperialism or neo-colonialism. Today, self-sustained economic growth and the defence of democracy require not a national liberation struggle against imperialism but a struggle against capitalism itself. And the very possibility of neo-colonialism arises because of the incapacity of under-developed capitalism to develop on its own, to solve national problems, and to resolve the deep-rooted social crisis, even when it is aided by socialist countries. This aspect, however, needs detailed treatment in a separate paper.

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Notes on the Origin and Structuring of the Industrial Labour Force in India—1880 to 1920

P. S. Gupta

The purpose of this paper is to suggest some lines of enquiry on Indian labour history in the light of work already done and sources readily available. In the period between the 1880s and 1920s an industrial labour force had begun to emerge in India, and was going to play a significant role in the social and political history of the country in subsequent decades.[1] If we examine the problems of labour supply, wage payments, factory discipline and labour protest for these years, we might build some hypotheses on the composition of the industrial labour force and its possible social and political roles.

I

Measured against the industrialization of India in recent years, industrial growth between 1880 and 1905 might appear insignificant. Yet in both absolute and relative terms there was considerable growth in cotton textiles, jute mills and coal mines. The number of workers in cotton mills increased from 39,537 in 1879-80 to 196,369 in 1904-05, in jute mills from 27,494 to

1. In 1892 the total number of factory hands was 316,715; in 1918-19 it rose to 1,292,700, R. K. Das, *Factory Labour in India* (Berlin, 1923), pp. 16, 19.

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133,162 and in coal mines from 14,804 to 92,740.[2] Attention must also be paid to the growth in the number of factories which needed skilled labour, such as iron and brass foundries, whose number increased from 38 in 1893 to 89 in 1904.[3]

By the end of the 1880s the cities of Calcutta, Kanpur, Ahmedabad and Bombay had assumed some of the characteristics of industrial towns. In the countrywide distribution of factories employing more than 100 persons Calcutta and its suburbs, Hooghly, Howrah and 24-Parganas had 76 establishments in 1888.[4] In the same period Kanpur had seven such factories, of which four employed more than 1,000. Bombay had the largest number; an estimate carried out in 1885 put the figure at 98.[5] Data on the number of smaller establishments for Bombay city for 1890 show the existence of 52 factories employing between 20 and 100 persons.[6] Similar data for Calcutta and its suburbs prove the existence of many small workshops using steam machinery for casting metals and processing raw materials, food and drink.[7] Some of these smaller establishments in both cities and provinces were of course seasonal industries, such as cotton ginning and pressing, jute pressing and sugar-refining. where the rhythm of activity could fit in with the rhythm of agricultural

2. Government of India, *Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India* (Calcutta, 1906), pp. 361, 377, 384

3. Ibid. p. 399; also see Government of India, *Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India 1893* (Calcutta, 1893), pp. 402-3.

4. P. Nolan, Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, General Dept, to Secy, Home Dept, Govt. of India, 10 Nov 1888 (National Archives of India —hereafter NAI—Legislative, April 1891, no. 94).

5. For Kanpur see W. F. Wells to Secy, Govt. of N. W. Province and Oudh, 21 Sept. 1888, App. A (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 135). For Bombay see "Extract from the Proceedings of the Govt. of Bombay in the General Department, no. 375, 4 Feb 1885" (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 228).

6. H. W. I. Bagnell, Inspector of Factories, to Acting Under Secy, Govt. of Bombay, 27 Feb 1890 (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, App. A 39, pp. 2-30).

7. Government of India, *Financial and Commercial Statistics of British India 1893*, pp. 387-418.

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labour in the countryside.[8] In the present paper we shall be concerned mainly with the labour force of industrial establishments which operated all the year round.

From what regions and castes, and under what motivation did the original work force at these urban centres come? Reliable statistical data on the caste distribution of the industrial labour force is fully available only with the census of 1921. The evidence given before the Factory Commission of 1890 cannot provide a definitive quantified answer, but does produce enough qualitative data for some preliminary hypotheses.

In the factories in and around Calcutta 20 witnesses from among workers were examined; almost all of them were landless. Seventeen were Bengalis, and the castes represented were the Tanti (weaver), Kaibarta (peasant and fisherman), Bagdi (labourer), Muchi (cobbler), Sankari (bangle-maker) and Bairagi (a religious sect).[9] It is worth noting that three of these—Kaibarta, Bagdi and Muchi—were sufficiently low down in the social hierarchy to be given the status of depressed classes in 1921.[10] The female labouring population invariably comprised widows: as one witness put it, "As a rule Bengali women never come to work in the mills unless they are widows in bad circumstances",[11] a testimony repeatedly corroborated by others. This sample of 20 witnesses may not be quite representative of the labour force, yet it would show that at that time the ethnic composition was predominantly Bengali. By 1929 the Royal Commission on Labour was commenting on the predominantly non-local character of factory labour in Calcutta; Bengalis comprised less than a quarter of jute-mill work-

8. See Magistrate of 24-Pargannahs to Commissioner, Presidency Division, 29 Feb 1888 (West Bengal Govt. Archives—hereafter WBGA—General Misc. Aug 1889, File 107/15-17); K. G. Gupta to Commissioner, Presidency Division, 13 Aug 1892 (WBGA—General Misc. Dec 1892 2A/8 nos. 1-2).

9. Proceedings of the Factory Commission, 27-30 Oct 1890, at Calcutta (NAI, Home-Judicial, Mar 1891, nos. 33-37).

10. *Census of India, 1921*, v, *Bengal, pt. i* (Calcutta, 1923), 365.

11. Proceedings of the 22nd meeting of the Factory Commission, 1890 (NAI, Home-Judicial, Mar 1891, no. 33), p. 135.

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ers, most of whom came from western Bihar and eastern UP.[12] There must, therefore, have been a definite shift in the recruitment pattern of the factories. This is suggested by other authorities as well. Buchanan discovered that in one jute mill in Calcutta 80 per cent of the employees in 1896 were Bengalis, whereas in 1926 the proportion was only 25 per cent.[13] The shift had probably occurred by 1905, when about two-thirds of the labour force in Bengal were immigrants.[14] The explanation usually given for this transition—apart from generalizations about the Bengalis' aversion to manual labour—is that immigrants from UP and Bihar were available at lower wages, rather like the Irish immigrants in the factory-towns of the early 19th-century England.[15] But the process needs to be more fully documented and alternative hypotheses tested.

The main industrial city in the upper Ganga valley, Kanpur, always recruited its labour from the densely populated neighbouring districts. This was true for 1890, and corroborated by the Royal Commission of 1929.[16] In the early years the local factories were almost entirely cotton or jute mills, with the notable exception of the big leather manufactory of Cooper Allen and Co. In these the labour came from three sources. Prompted mainly by financial necessity, the Koeris provided labour for most of the weaving mills. There is a case of a handloom weaver (Koeri) who had sent his son to a jute mill to get extra income while he himself plied his craft for a few more years, until he too gave it up and followed his son into the factory.[17] The second source consisted of tenants evicted by land-

12. Royal Commission on Labour in India (hereafter RCL), *Report* (1931), p. 11.

13. D. A. Buchanan, *Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India* (New York, 1934), p. 296.

14. Foley, *Report on Labour in Bengal* (1906), as quoted in R. K. Das, *Factory Labour in India*, p. 24.

15. G. M. Broughton, *Labour in Indian Industries* (London, 1924), p. 74.

16. RCL, *Report*, p. 9f.

17. Evidence of Rajab, Proceedings of the 21st meeting of the Factory Commission, 24 Oct 1890, Cawnpore (NAI, Home-Judicial, Mar 1891, no. 32), p. 131.

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lords. The post-1858 land settlement in Awadh (the Oudh Rent Act of 1868) had strengthened the *taluqdars'* powers of eviction, which was only partially modified by the subsequent legislation of 1886.[18] Reluctantly, many erstwhile agriculturists—some of them brahmins—were forced to seek factory employment. Of the five workmen interviewed, who were from agricultural families, two were brahmins who had been evicted, one a kshatriya similarly situated, and two (one Ahir and one Kurmi) came from families that still lived on land but were unable to find enough work or income from this source alone.[19] The role of the factories in taking "a part of the population of the land" was appreciatively commented by the magistrate of Kanpur in 1888.[20] The third source was peculiar to one industry (Cooper Allen's army boot factory), but illustrates the more general point of the caste origins of certain types of industrial labour. The Chamar (cobbler) caste appears to have formed a major part of the factory's labour force.[21]

In the second decade of the 20th century the labour force in UP still retained certain early features. The unfavourable land-man ratio prompted steady migration of the landless or partially landless castes to other provinces. Commitment to industry was not uniformly strong among lower castes. Castes accustomed to cultivating the soil such as the Kurmi, Lodhi and Jat tended to prefer semi-agricultural industries such as tea cultivation or manufacturing of sugar. Other castes—the Kahar, Ahir and Chamar—willingly took to spinning and weaving, the Chamars having become unable to find sufficient employment similar to their traditional crafts in leather factories.[22]

18. T. R. Metcalf, *Aftermath of Revolt, India, 1857-70* (Princeton, 1965), pp. 195-97.

19. Evidence of Sheo Shankar, Sheo Audhar, Ramdeen, Bhola and Durga, Proceedings of the Factory Commission, 1890, at Cawnpore (NAI, Home-Judicial, Mar 1891, nos. 30-32).

20. H. D. Moule to Secy, Govt. of N. W. P. and Oudh, 26 Dec 1888 (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 137).

21. Proceedings of the Factory Commission, 1890 (NAI, Home-Judicial, Mar 1891, nos. 30-32).

22. Broughton, op. cit., p. 58.

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A similar process of adaptation by castes plying traditional handicrafts in comparable factory jobs occurred in Ahmedabad. An important manufacturer wrote in 1890: "The hands employed in the weaving department in Ahmedabad are generally those who themselves or their fathers (sic.) were handloom weavers", adding that these people had been suffering under the competition of the Lancashire textiles until the local textile industry provided alternative jobs.[23] Ahmedabad also got a fair amount of its unskilled labour from a local landless low caste, the Wagri, who traditionally lived by begging.[24] There was no change in this reliance on the local supply of labour over the next 40 years: in 1929 65 per cent of the labour force still came from Ahmedabad district or Baroda.[25]

The over-populated agricultural district of Ratnagiri in the Konkan region and, to a less extent, the districts of Kolhapur, Poona and Ahmadnagar in the Deccan contributed the bulk of labour to the city of Bombay during the whole period. From the earliest days we notice the migration of Muslim handloom weavers from the UP and Delhi regions to Bombay in quest of jobs in mills as weavers, as a result of which by 1921 the weaving departments tended to have a large proportion of Muslim workmen. Otherwise, there does not appear to have been any marked predominance of certain castes in the labour force. Certainly, the "untouchables" did not provide the original labour force for the Bombay textile industry.[26] Rural over-population provided the main impulse for a cross-section of castes to migrate to the town. Any serious analysis of why certain castes tended to migrate must not only ascertain the varna hierarchy but also locate the "dominant caste" in that region. Perhaps the migrant factory labourers came from castes which lacked prospects of upward mobility in the given pattern of dominance in their villages.

23. R. Chotalal to Secy, Govt. of India, Home Dept, 12 Dec 1890 (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 351, p. 240).

24. Ibid. p. 238.

25. RCL. *Report*, p. 9f.

26. M. D. Morris, *Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India: A Study of the Bombay Cotton Mills, 1854-1947* (Bombay, 1965), p. 74.

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From what has already been said about the regional and caste origins of the industrial workers in some cities, a few hypotheses emerge regarding the motivation behind the quest for employment. In discussing these we shall also touch on the scarcity of labour that was alleged to have been a feature of industrial recruitment in the years before 1914.[27] Calcutta, Kanpur, Ahmedabad and Bombay got their supply of labour without difficulty, thanks to the pressure of population on the land and the diminishing opportunities for handicraftsmen. A rural landless class had existed even before the establishment of British rule;[28] even where they had some rights of cultivation the income could seldom be adequate. In some regions such as Ahmedabad castes like the Wagri had traditionally suffered this lot. Elsewhere, as in UP, British tenancy legislation left many tenants with no option but to go into the factory. Whether there was or was not "de-industrialization" under the impact of foreign competition is still a matter of controversy among economic historians.[29] The evidence, however, suggests that in some places (viz., Ahmedabad, Bombay and Calcutta) handloom weavers were saved from destitution by the opportunities provided by the textile weaving industries. It is possible that the traditional craft-castes shifted to analogous factory occupation because of the attraction of higher and regular wages, rather than of the whiplash of technological unemployment. The migration of some handicraftsmen to factories in Kanpur was no doubt of this sort. Thus it was suggested that employment in the mills "is well-paid and popular and has undoubtedly raised the wages of labour all round in the neighbourhood of Cawnpore".[30] Even where the difference between the income of a common coolie and that of a mill-hand was not

27. RCL, *Report*, passim; A. R. Burnett-Hurst, "Suggestions for Labour Legislation in India", *Indian Journal of Economics*, iii (1920-22), 497.

28. D. Kumar, *Land and Caste in South India* (Cambridge, 1965).

29. D. and A. Thorner, *Land and Labour in India* (Bombay, 1962), Chapter vi ,passim; Articles by M. D. Morris, B. Chandra and T. Raychaudhuri in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, v, no. 1 (1968).

30. H. D. Moule to Secy, Govt. of N. W. P. and Oudh, 26 Dec 1888 (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 137).

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substantial, factory labourers had the attraction of regular payment.[31]

In his detailed study of the cotton textile labourers in Bombay city M. D. Morris made out a good case against the oft-repeated allegation of a shortage of labour supply before 1920.[32] He has interpreted the tendency of wages to remain at the same level over a period of time (except for the years of the plague) as evidence for the existence of a pool of potential recruits. He has corroborated this by qualitative evidence from contemporary sources. In addition, he has argued that the relatively little use made by the Bombay mills of woman labour (contrast Lancashire) suggests an abundance of adult male labour supply.[33] A similar inference may be drawn from the widespread practice of giving *bakhsheesh* to the jobber to secure employment.[34] This is corroborated by evidence for the 1880s for places as far from each other as Broach and Surat in the west, Kanpur in the north, and Calcutta in the east. The magistrates of Broach and Surat testified to "the competition for places at the mills".[35] Practically all the witnesses from Kanpur and Calcutta before the Factory Commission of 1890 admitted that it would be easy to fill their vacancies. In the light of these facts whether a labour shortage existed at all should be considered afresh.

In the early days of the construction of railways, roads and other public works, especially in parts of central India, labour had to be recruited on a contract basis from a long distance. Plantations in Assam relied on indentured recruitment from outside the province from an early date.[36] The steel town of

31, H. E. M. James, Collector of Ahmedabad, to Commissioner, Northern Division, 28 July 1888 (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 119); also see NAI, Commerce & Industry—Factories, July 1907, nos. 2-14 (The file has evidence of workers who had left factory work but acknowledged its value as giving more regular employment than agriculture).

32. M. D. Morris, *Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force*, pp. 44-71.

33. Ibid. p. 69.

34. Ibid. p. 135, no. 18.

35. NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, nos. 121-22.

36. R. K. Das, *Plantation Labour in India* (Calcutta, 1931), passim.

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Jamshedpur got its labour from a cross-section of many provinces, because it was started in a thinly populated forest area.[37] In recruiting labour in the coal-mining industry in Bengal and Bihar up to the first World War the colliery-owners had to use the *zamīndārī* method of recruitment by which the Santhal tribesmen were attracted by offers of plots of land.[38] A reasonable hypothesis would be that labour migration followed a well-observed pattern of moving in stages of relatively short-distance migration from village to small town in the first instance, and from there to the big industrial towns in the second. Reluctance to venture into the uncertainties of construction work or plantation labour in a distant region undoubtedly limited the area of mobility. Apart from this, the migrant labourer had no inhibitions in moving in quest of better economic opportunities. Even in the plantations, by the end of the 1870s, there had begun the "free migration" of labourers (that is, without reference to the Bengal Labour Districts Emigration Act of 1873). The Government of India recognized this by passing the Inland Emigration Act in 1882, which permitted free recruitment of labour.[39] In the coalfields the non-*zamīndārī* system of recruitment by contract started at the turn of the century, became more popular and successful after the first World War, and gave the Bengal and Bihar coalfields a fairly stable and skilled source of labour from the migrants of UP.[40]

Did the notion of labour scarcity arise because of a temporary difficulty faced by some industries in the first four or five years of this century, and persist in the minds of managers and entrepreneurs for reasons so far unexplained? Morris has shown that while the plague in 1896-97 did create a shortage of labour in Bombay, its effects wore off within a couple of years and there was no complaint of scarcity of labour later on.[41]

37. RCL, *Report*, p. 9f.
38. B. R. Seth, *Labour in the Indian Coal Industry* (Bombay, 1940), pp. 24, 43ff.
39. R. K. Das, *History of Indian Labour Legislation* (Calcutta, 1941), pp. 16-20.
40. Seth, op. cit., p. 27f.
41. Morris, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

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Yet we have evidence that between 1902 and 1904 Kanpur suffered more severely from the plague, which persisted up to 1908.[42] The labour shortage affected Bengal too. In course of discussing the desirability of preventing children under nine years being brought inside the factory, a government despatch stated :

> The Special Inspector of Factories ... draws attention to the fact that mills are at present shorthanded; and states that, if children are altogether denied admission not only will hardship be entailed on the parents, but that the industry will also be affected adversely, because much female labour will thereby be lost to it.[43]

Two years later a similar complaint of labour shortage was made by the Commissioner of the Nagpur Division in the Central Provinces. He said :

> Famines and plague epidemics have been followed by a most marked increase in the demand for labour, a demand which cannot be regarded as ephemeral ... already there is springing up the beginning of a demand for labour-saving appliances. At the moment the Empress Mills...are short by 500 hands, and are anxious to employ a further 1,000 hands in an extension of their factories.[44]

Obviously, we need to examine more closely the effects of plague and famine in different parts of the country and assess the demographic implications for labour supply. It is quite possible that the vacuum created by plague in the labour requirements of Indian industries was quickly filled up by migration so far as the big cities and densely populated areas were concerned, whereas in places in the interior, such as the Central Provinces, the process took longer.

The notion of labour scarcity may have implied a scarcity of skilled hands. This has not been adequately examined. Morris was primarily concerned to show the existence of a surplus pool

42. V. B. Karnik, *Strikes in India* (Bombay, 1967), pp. 29-31.

43. A. Earle, Secy to Govt. of Bengal, to Secy, Govt. of India, 2 Feb 1904 (NAI, Commerce & Industry—Factories, May 1905, no. 6).

44. R. Craddock to Secy to the Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces, 13 July 1906 (NAI, Commerce & Industry—Factories, Jan 1907, no. 24).

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of raw labour. He has, however, stated that he finds no evidence for the allegation of a shortage of skilled labour as far as the Bombay textile industry is concerned.[45] Since the textiles produced in Bombay were of a relatively coarse quality not requiring a high degree of skill (except a few types of work), this is plausible. In other industries there might have been certain processes for which there was a persistent need to train a cadre of skilled artisans. The increase in the number of iron and brass foundries, the growth of the railway workshops, and the starting of the iron and steel factory at Jamshedpur—all point to the growing need for some skilled operatives. Even the simpler industries and workshops using steam power (cotton presses, jute presses, bone-crushing mills, etc.) needed a few men each to run the engine-room. The 1921 census in Bengal and Bihar gives us data on the proportion of skilled to unskilled labour among different castes in various industries (see below), but hardly any studies have been made to show how and when certain castes or groups of people became the principal, if not the only, source of skilled labour in different industries. More research at the level of individual firms and industries is being indicated. One point worth examining is to see whether the traditional craftsmen who turned to analogous factory-work managed to have a head-start over migrant agricultural labour in learning these skills. The evidence is conflicting. In Bombay the weaving section had tended to become a closed shop of Muslim weavers and a few Hindu workers from upper castes.[46] On the other hand in the iron foundries, machinery and engineering works in Bengal in 1921 the Kamars and Lohars (the blacksmith castes) were "unexpectedly few". Mohammedan Sheikhs, Hindu Kaibartas, Chamars and Muchis made up the skilled grades.[47]

45. Morris, op. cit., p. 130, no. 3.
46. Ibid. p. 79.
47. *Census of India 1921*, v, *Bengal, pt. i, Report*, p . 406f.

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II

The Royal Commission on Labour repeatedly affirmed in its report of 1929 that the Indian worker remained only partially committed to industrial life; half of his mind was on the village from where he had come. A high degree of labour turnover and absenteeism was cited as evidence of this. The management appears to have come to terms with this by keeping more men on the rolls than was necessary, and preferring to make men work for longer hours at a slow pace than for shorter hours with their noses to the grindstone. Thus for nearly 40 years of its existence the industrial labour force appears to have only partially accepted the discipline of an industrial society. This picture of the past is accepted by Charles Myers in his study of industrial relations in post-1945 India.[48]

It is wise not to take these statements completely at their face value. Although evidence for 1888 shows that even efficient and well-managed factories such as the Empress Mills at Nagpur found it necessary to keep 2,450 persons on the muster-roll, the average attendance did not exceed 2,200, and the latter figure included 200 workers as substitutes for still others on authorized leave.[49] In the same year the Inspector of Factories for Bombay reported that though official holidays were very few, "all the hands ... take holidays on their own account when it suits them. On an average, a hand does not work more than 300 days in the year, and can get leave pretty much as he likes".[50] This need not necessarily imply the pull of the village, but can be interpreted as one form of labour protest against the drudgery and monotony of industrial work. Absenteeism has often played a similar role in developed industrial societies. The evidence of workers from Calcutta and Kanpur before the Factory Commission of 1890 does not, by and large, suggest prolonged holidays spent in native villages. Only one of the 20 witnesses examined

48. C. A. Myers, *Industrial Relations in India* (Bombay, 1958), pp. 75-85.

49. NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 106, p. 2.

50. W. Drew to Under Secretary, Govt. of Bombay, 10 July 1888 (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 117).

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had land and cattle in his Orissa village to which he returned periodically. Two others, who had some land or a cow, lived near their place of work and did not need to go on long leave. The rest had little to attract them to their village, where they seldom went.[51] The minutes of the Textile Factory Labour Committee of 1907 contains deposition of a number of former factory workers in Bombay who for one reason or another had given up factory work. Even these did not take leave frequently when in service.[52]

Morris has tried to examine all the available data on labour turnover and absenteeism in Bombay. He rightly points out :

> High labour turnover in individual mills, which is all that observers could identify, must not be correlated automatically with a return to the countryside. High labour turnover in individual mills is clearly compatible with low rates of departure from the industry.[53]

His general conclusion is that although there might have been a lot of intra-industry mobility, the number of workers permanently attached to the industry increased over the period.[54] Absenteeism, too, appears to have been overstated.

Evidence on labour turnover and absenteeism cannot, then, be automatically equated with a propensity to return to the villages. They may be consistent with the acceptance of industrial life. The other line of argument regarding the reluctant submission by Indian workers to the rhythm of factory work refers to the slackness of discipline within the factory. In 1888 Inspector W. Drew reported :

> For a mill with the same number of spindles quite twice as many hands are employed in Bombay as in England.... On an average about 9% at a time are taking their meals or resting.[55]

A jute mill manager near Calcutta with six years' experience of

51. NAI, Home-Judicial, Mar 1891, nos. 33-37.
52. NAI, Commerce & Industry—Factories, July 1907, nos. 2-14.
53. Op. cit., p. 87.
54. Ibid. pp. 88-91.
55. NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 117.

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supervising nearly 4,000 persons wrote :

> At home I have seen a squad doffing to 18 frames; out here they never have more than 10 to 12 frames. We have really about three times the number on a squad we have at home. This holds good throughout the works, as we have over double the number at work always than what is allowed at home: for instance, a boy will look after one roving here, while at home a boy looks after two. A woman will look after one drawing, while at home I have seen a woman looking after three and never less than two of the same size that are here. A full-bodied man will only look after one loom.[56]

Finally, in 1907 the Factory Labour Committee commented : "No legislation can alter the nature and ingrained habits of Indian workers. They have been in the habit of leaving their work at odd and uncertain periods throughout the nominal working hours".[57]

From the above it would not be correct to infer that the ingrained reluctance of the Indian factory hand forced the management to accept this remarkably lax pattern of work-regulation. The policy of the management could have been a cause rather than a consequence of the workers' laxity. When we see evidence such as that of a Madras factory manager complaining that over the years the workers' skills had improved, but application had not,[58] we should ask whether the management was willing or able to sell products containing a high input of skill and prepared to give high rates for skilled work. This hypothesis has been tested by Morris for Bombay. Employers there seldom took steps to shorten hours and increase efficiency to provide the minimum facilities for food and other necessities at the place of work, and consequently the workers developed their own style of work. With Bombay managing agents being paid a commission for every pound of output, with labour being paid by piecework, with labour costs being a small proportion to total costs, and

56. R. Keddie to Magistrate, 24-Pargannahs, 15 Feb 1890 (WBGA, General, Misc., Apr 1890, File 92, nos. 27-28).

57. *Report of the Factory Labour Committee 1907*, p. 12 (NAI, Commerce & Industry—Factories, July 1907, no. 14, Enclosure 1).

58. R K Das, *Factory Labour in India*, p. 100.

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with the product not needing great supervisory skill, it is not surprising that very little was done by the management to promote labour efficiency and create a disciplined labour force.[59] Research along these lines to test how far and for what reasons factory discipline remained loose is suggested for the jute and coal industries.

III

From the preceding discussion on the source of industrial labour and the extent to which it was accepting industrial society it would appear that we can talk of some categories of urban industrial workers as becoming a distinctly industrial proletariat, with little nostalgic attachment to the land. The questions that now arise relate to the way in which this working class got differentiated into groups according to economic, social and political pressures and to the types of organized protest against the injustice of the industrial society that arose.

In Europe and the USA craft unionism was the earliest type of trade unionism. Skilled workmen doing similar operations in different industries or in different firms in the same industry in different parts of the country tended to form countrywide associations to maintain a standard rate of wages and an agreed limit to the hours of work. Such craft unions emerged in all industries which were prospering as a result of industrial growth and which were dependent on the services of the skilled grades. It did not matter whether the industries were mechanized or not, as long as they were growing industries. Successful craft unions existed in the building trades, metal and engineering industries, certain grades of cotton textiles and others.

In India similar skilled labour was needed in several industries that had grown in the period before 1920. Payment by piecework in the textile trades being widespread, the differential between the wages of the slightly skilled and the unskilled was 70 per cent as early as 1888.[60] Yet there is not much

59. Morris, op. cit., p. 117.

60. H. E. M. James, Collector of Ahmedabad, to Commissioner, Northern Divn, 28 July 1888 (NAI, Legislative, Apr 1891, no. 119).

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evidence of craft unionism. From the beginning Indian trade unions have been organized on the basis of firms or industries. This may have been owing largely to the fact that by the 1920s, when trade unions were given legal recognition, political parties and philanthropists were giving a lead to the workers, and therefore tended to take a view of trade unionism wider than one covering only the skilled worker. Still, since craft unionism tends to be the natural form of self-organization by skilled workers, we need to think more about the reasons for its non-appearance. Research could be done on caste associations in different crafts to see whether any of them tried to take on the functions of a craft union. Investigating the Bihar and Bengal data in the light of the census of 1911, Broughton came to the conclusion that the caste councils fixed trade holidays, prevented rivalry for the same client between two craftsmen, and could outcaste recalcitrants. He adds:

> These are, however, at best negative functions. There is no attempt to improve conditions of working or to regulate wages or hours. Further, there is no organisation to weld together members of different castes who follow the same occupation.[61]

In UP there was an institution comparable to a local craft union that united different castes in the pursuit of economic aims.

> The Rajs (brick masons) of Meerut are not a real caste, but an occupational group recruited from many castes (Chamar, Khatik, Mohammedan, etc.). They have a system of apprenticeship.... The members of the guild remain members of their own castes as regards social matter.[62]

Historians and anthropologists should co-operate to find out whether similar associations existed in other parts of the country.

The essence of trade unionism in its economic aspects is job control against newcomers, craft-unions being the "closed shop" of the skilled worker. In Indian industries efforts at job control by workers appear to have been made in these years through the

61. Broughton, op. cit., p. 45.
62. Ibid. p. 61.

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media of caste loyalties. The recruitment of mill-hands was done by a jobber (*mistry* or *muqaddam*), who tended to get people from his own native region or community. As an overseer of pieceworkers, he had an incentive to maintain the outpost of his department and encourage the development of skills among some workers. As and when such skills developed, it was not easy to organize craft unions that cut across the barriers of caste and the dominance of the jobber. So elements of craft unionism combined with regional and communal loyalties led to the dominance of the skilled occupations in different industries by castes and communities which had been sufficiently numerous and intelligent to carve out niches for themselves.

From the census of 1921 in Bengal and Bihar it has been possible to show relatively greater preponderance of certain castes in some skilled jobs in some industries.[63] The same caste might be in a relatively weak position in some industry and strong in another, so far as the skilled jobs were concerned. The explanation lies in the early history of recruitment in the industry, in which more research should be done. In the coalmining industry in Bengal the Santhals comprised 36.1 per cent of the total labour force and 14.3 per cent of the skilled and 38.3 per cent of the unskilled respectively; the Bauris comprised 21.4 per cent of the labour force and were almost equally divided between the skilled (23.7 per cent) and the unskilled (21.3 per cent). The Mohammedan workers comprised only 3.4 per cent of the total labour force, but accounted for 10.2 per cent of the skilled grades and only 2.9 per cent of the unskilled grades. In the jute industry the Mohammedans were in a more than proportionate control of the skilled grades; they were 28.6 per cent of the labour force, 37.7 per cent of the skilled grades and 21.2 per cent of the unskilled grades. On the other hand the Chamar caste, which formed 10.3 per cent of the labour force, controlled only 5.5 per cent of the skilled grades and filled 13.9 per cent of the unskilled grades. In two other industries, where skill was

63. The percentages have been worked out from the basic data in the following volumes of the *Census of India 1921*. For Bengal, v, pt. ii, table xxii, pts. iv-v. For Bihar, vii, pt. ii, table xxii, pts. iv-v.

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at a premium, a similar more-than-proportionate hold of the Mohammedan community is noticed. In iron foundries they constituted 18 per cent of the labour force, but 25.1 per cent of the skilled grades and 14.1 per cent of the unskilled grades. Contrast the Chamars again, who accounted for 9.3 per cent of the labour force, but 4.5 per cent of the skilled and 11.8 per cent of the unskilled grades. Two Hindu castes had a slightly more than proportionate control over the skilled grades. The Chasi (cultivating) Kaibartas and Jalia (fishermen) Kaibartas were each 3.1 per cent of the labour force respectively; both, however, controlled between 6.5 and 6.8 per cent of the skilled grades and filled only 1.3 to 1.4 per cent of the unskilled grades. In the machinery and engineering works the Chasi Kaibartas were stronger, being 11.1 per cent of the labour force, but 16 per cent of the skilled and 3.4 per cent of the unskilled grades. Here the Mohammedans were practically in the same proportion to the total labour force, skilled and unskilled grades.

In Bihar the Mohammedans were in a relatively strong position in the skilled grades of the iron and steel as well as the machinery and engineering industries. In the former they comprised 12.6 per cent of the total labour force, but controlled 21 per cent of the skilled jobs and only 7.3 per cent of the unskilled grades. In the latter they formed 18.5 per cent of the labour force, but 25.9 per cent of the skilled grades and only 12.5 per cent of the unskilled. No other caste approached them in strength in the engineering industries, but in the iron and steel works Rajputs and brahmins (mainly from outside Bihar) had more than a proportionate share of skilled jobs. The Rajputs formed 6 per cent of the total labour force, 10.9 per cent of the skilled labour, and 2.9 per cent of the unskilled labour; the brahmins formed 4.5 per cent, 9.7 per cent and 1.1 per cent respectively of the three categories.

The census of 1911 does not give data comparable in all respects to that of 1921. Nevertheless, research both on the census figures as well as on the records of individual industries is needed to test how far the caste-wise distribution of skilled jobs changed in course of time, how far it was the outcome of informal job control exercised by the workers, even without

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formal trade unions, and how far it was the result of management policies.

IV

It remains now to discuss strikes or, to use a more generalized term, "labour protests". In writing labour history it is a mistake to study it simply as a series of protest movements. Some modern labour economists have even suggested that in the story of the growth of an industrial labour force it is not so much protest that is the central theme as the response of the body of workers to the technical needs of a particular industry, to the "web of rules" at the place of work and to the prospects or lack of these that a market economy holds out to them. Protest movements tend to be numerous at an early stage of industrialization and are often more a protest against industrialism as such rather than against the policies of individual employers. In later stages industrial labour develops, with or without the assistance of other agencies such as the government, management or political parties, subtler forms of asserting its demands.[64] Without going all the way with this school of thought we would suggest that all studies of the protest elements in the Indian labour movement should be preceded by careful research into the way industrial labour has been structured in different parts of the country. Only then would one be able to ask precise questions regarding protest movements and classify them for subtler analysis.

Studies of strikes should seek to distinguish between the economic and political elements in them, and some instances of rioting can be more fruitfully studied as having functional similarities with strikes. To take the last point first, in the early stages of industrialization it was difficult to organize effective strikes by peaceful picketing because the sense of class solidarity had not yet broken the barriers of regional or caste loyalties. So the aggrieved workers often found it necessary to resort to machine-wrecking, physical violence against the employers and

64 C. Kerr, J. T. Dunlop, F. H. Harbison and C. M. Myers, *Industrialism and Industrial Man* (Harvard, 1960), passim.

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blacklegs, or the destruction of industrial products. Moral questions apart, there was a method in this madness, the rationale of which has been shown by Hobsbawm in his discussion of the Luddites in England.[65] In India many of the early strikes saw such scenes of violence, and there must be many episodes described officially as riots, of which a partial explanation might be the discontent of the industrial labour.

Economic strikes, pure and simple, probably became less common in the 1920s and 1930s with the increased participation by political parties in the labour movement. In the pre-1918 period we have instances of purely industrial grievances sparking off a strike. We should try to distinguish between those caused by technological factors such as the speeding-up of the pace of work or lengthening the hours at the same rate of pay (as happened with the strikes over the introduction of electric lighting in Bombay between 1905 and 1908)[66] and those which were simply responses to the rising cost of living (as happened in the last years of the first World War).[67] Measured against precise questions, the behaviour pattern of different groups of workers before, during and after a strike will become intelligible.

It would also become easier to understand the extent to which outside political leadership exercised any permanent influence on the responses of the industrial workers. In the period before 1914 the most notable political strike was that over Tilak's arrest in June 1908. The published sources suggest that since December 1907 Tilak had built up a following among the mill-hands, and commanded special influence over the jobbers and head jobbers who were urged by him to give a moral lead to the mill-hands. The strike protesting against his arrest was undoubtedly an index of his personal popularity.[68] What needs to be examined is the relationship between the strikes of 1905 and 1907 which

65. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men* (London, 1964), chapter on "Machine Breakers".

66. Morris, op. cit, p. 164: Karnik, *Strikes in India*, p . 32f.

67. Karnik, op. cit., pp. 60-62.

68. Government of Bombay, *Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India*, ii (Bombay, 1958), 252-75.

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were primarily economic in character[69] and the strike over Tilak's arrest in 1908 which was political. Did the same rank and file leadership take initiative in all these strikes? Did the nationalist organizations manage to maintain any permanent hold over workers in important textile mills?

Tilak worked through the jobbers with primarily a political end in view. The political leaders of the trade union movement in the 1920s were to be critical of the way the jobbers were hindering the development of a stable work force and often playing the employers' game. The shift in emphasis was evidently owing to the fact that whereas Tilak's campaign among the factory workers had a limited agitational aim, trade union leaders of a later generation wanted to build up enduring bases within the working class. By that time, however, different industries had created hierarchies of skilled workmen, various degrees of work force commitment, and different caste and community compositions in the labour force. The interaction of outside political leadership with these was complex. The history of the labour movement in the 1920s and 1930s will have to start by analysing these complexities.

69. Morris, op. cit., pp. 164f, 179.

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